

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-fourth
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 2 and 3, 1994

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THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FOURTH ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 164th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 2, 1994, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 2 and 3, 1994. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 2, 1994, at 6:00 P.M.

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried via satellite transmission to more than 1,000 stake centers. The priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately 900 locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

*The First Presidency:*¹ Gordon B. Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson

The Council of the Twelve: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, and Robert D. Hales

The Presidency of the Seventy: Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, and W. Eugene Hansen

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Ben B. Banks, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, F. Enzio Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, Loren C. Dunn, Henry B. Eyring, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goasland, John H. Groberg, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, Jeffrey R. Holland, F. Burton Howard, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L. Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Glenn L. Pace, James M. Paramore, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Hartman Rector, Jr., Hans B. Ringger, Earl C. Tingey, and Robert E. Wells

*The Second Quorum of the Seventy:*² Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Eduardo Ayala, C. Max Caldwell, Albert Choules Jr., Gary J. Coleman, Claudio Roberto Mendes Costa, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Julio E. Dávila, John B. Dickson, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, Lloyd P. George, Han In Sang, Jay E. Jensen, Malcolm S. Jeppesen, W. Don Ladd, W. Mack Lawrence, Augusto A. Lim, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, John M. Madsen, Helvécio Martins, James O. Mason, Gerald E. Melchin, V. Dallas Merrell,

¹President Ezra Taft Benson was excused.

²Elder Clinton L. Cutler was excused.

Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Jorge A. Rojas, Sam K. Shimabukuro, David E. Sorensen, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Horacio A. Tenorio, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, J Ballard Washburn, Lance B. Wickman, Lowell D. Wood, and Durrel A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Merrill J. Bateman, H. David Burton, and Richard C. Edgley

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 164th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 2, 1994, at 10:00 A.M. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for the session was provided by a Relief Society choir from the Olympus Utah Region, with Bonnie Winterton conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the choir sang "How Gentle God's Commands." President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, in this, the first general session of the 164th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our love to President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference in his apartment. We miss him. We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Dallin H. Oaks, Horacio A. Tenorio, and Cree-L

Kofford are seated on the stand, and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders William R. Bradford and F. David Stanley are in attendance. We welcome also the many others who are watching these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except President Ezra Taft Benson and Elder Clinton L. Cutler, who are excused. We also acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, seated on the stand. And we extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The music for the session will be provided by a Relief Society choir from the Olympus Utah Region, under the direction of Sister Bonnie Winterton, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ. The choir opened this session by singing "How Gentle God's Commands" and will now favor us with "Oh, How Lovely Was the Morning." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder John K. Carmack of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Oh, How Lovely Was the Morning."

Elder John K. Carmack offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Carmack, for that beautiful and touching prayer.

Our first speaker at this session of the conference will be Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder James E. Faust

I come before you, my brothers, sisters, and friends, with the sincere hope that you will extend to me your faith and prayers as I humbly seek in the next few minutes to acknowledge the hand of the Lord our God in our lives. I extend to Sister Norma Ashton our love and prayers in the passing of our beloved associate, Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Five loaves and two fishes

Some months ago, as Elder Spencer J. Condie and I were in the Salt Lake airport, we unexpectedly met a devoted and faithful couple who have been friends for long years. This couple has spent a lifetime of service, meekly, faithfully, and effectively trying to build up the Church in many places in the world. Elder Condie noted, "Isn't it remarkable what people with five loaves and two fishes do to build up the kingdom of God?" This kind of quiet, devoted service is surely a fulfillment of the word of God "that the fullness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers" (D&C 1:23). Today I would like to speak of those of us who have only talents equal to five loaves and two fishes to offer the Savior to help feed the multitudes.

"When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"

"And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do" (John 6:5-6).

Philip answered quickly that there was not enough money to buy bread for the multitude. Then Andrew, Peter's brother, said, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes" (v. 9).

"And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

"And they did all eat, and were filled.

"And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

"And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men" (Mark 6:41-44).

Subsequently their hearts were hardened in that they forgot the divine mission of Jesus, "for they considered not the miracle of the loaves" (v. 52).

We have forgotten the miracle

In our time, we seem to have forgotten the miracle of the five loaves and the two fishes in favor of the miracles wrought by the mind and hand of men. I refer to the marvels of modern transportation and the increasing sophistication of all scientific knowledge, including the new electronic highway. We have forgotten that this amazing knowledge comes to mankind only as God chooses to reveal it, and it should be used for purposes nobler and wiser than mere entertainment. This knowledge permits the words of the prophets of God to be bounced off satellites hovering over the earth so it is possible

for much of mankind to hear their messages.

With this great knowledge has come also some skepticism about the simple and profound eternal truths taught in the miracle of the loaves and of the fishes—namely, that God rules in the heavens and the earth through his infinite intelligence and goodness.

God has fed us in our time

We are also to understand and remember that we too, like the lad in the New Testament account, are the spirit children of our Heavenly Father and that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior, and the Redeemer of the world. We believe that in the centuries following the establishment of his kingdom upon the earth, the doctrines and the ordinances were changed, resulting in a falling away and the loss of the keys of priesthood authority from the earth. A miracle even greater than that of the loaves and the fishes was the vision of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who saw the Father and the Son in the Sacred Grove near Palmyra, New York. Subsequently the keys, the priesthood, and the saving ordinances were restored in their fulness, and Christ's church was reestablished in our time. Thus God has again "fed" us and filled our "baskets" to overflowing.

Service of members with few talents

It has been said that this church does not necessarily attract great people but more often makes ordinary people great. Many nameless people with gifts equal only to five loaves and two small fishes magnify their callings and serve without attention or recognition, feeding literally thousands. In large measure, they make possible the fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream that the latter-day gospel of Christ would be like a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, rolling forth until it fills the

whole earth (see Daniel 2:34–35; D&C 65:2). These are the hundreds of thousands of leaders and teachers in all of the auxiliaries and priesthood quorums, the home teachers, the Relief Society visiting teachers. These are the many humble bishops in the Church, some without formal training but greatly magnified, always learning, with a humble desire to serve the Lord and the people of their wards.

Any man or woman who enjoys the Master's touch is like potter's clay in his hands. More important than acquiring fame or fortune is being what God wants us to be. Before we came to this earth, we may have been fashioned to do some small good in this life that no one else can do. The Lord said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). If God has a work for those with many talents, I believe he also has an important work for those of us who have few.

Ego and pride prevent service

What is the central characteristic of those having only five loaves and two fishes? What makes it possible, under the Master's touch, for them to serve, lift, and bless so that they touch for good the lives of hundreds, even thousands? After a lifetime of dealing in the affairs of men and women, I believe it is the ability to overcome personal ego and pride—both are enemies to the full enjoyment of the Spirit of God and to walking humbly before him. The ego interferes with husbands and wives asking each other for forgiveness. It prevents the enjoyment of the full sweetness of a higher love. The ego often prevents parents and children from fully understanding each other. The ego enlarges our feelings of self-importance and worth. It blinds us to reality. Pride

keeps us from confessing our sins and shortcomings to the Lord and working out our repentance.

What of those who have talents equal only to two loaves and one fish? They do much of the hard, menial, unchallenging, poorly compensated work of the world. Life may not have been quite fair to them. They struggle to have enough to hold body and soul together. But they are not forgotten. If their talents are used to build the kingdom of God and serve others, they will fully enjoy the promises of the Savior. The great promise of the Savior is that they "shall receive [their] reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23). The one who had only two talents was able to say, "Lord, thou deliverdest unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them." Thus said the Lord, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter . . . into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:22-23).

It is a blessing for some to be given minds and talents equal to fifteen loaves and ten fishes. They have so very much that they can contribute, but some become less than they might. They do not reach their potential of service, perhaps because they take so much pride in what they think they know and what they have. They seem unwilling or unable to yield "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit . . . and [become] as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [them], even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:19).

Humble members strengthen the Church

During much of my life, a few journalists and dissidents have predicted the imminent downfall of this church. They have often pointed to the alleged

disaffection of the youth of the Church. The lives and the dedication of our almost 50,000 young missionaries are testament enough of the faithfulness of many of our youth. In addition, during my lifetime, the Church has grown from 525,000 to about 8,500,000. I believe and testify that this is because of the restoration of the fulness of the keys and authority of the gospel of Christ to Joseph Smith.

Recently an out-of-state journalist used the phrase that there were appearing "cracks in the walls of the temple," figuratively speaking, of course. By this I suppose he meant that the moorings of the Church were being shaken by a very few who do not fully sustain the leaders of the Church or keep their covenants. To dispel this perception of cracks in our members' faith, we need only to observe the joyful people who worship in any of our forty-five temples worldwide. Many are couples clutching their little bags and holding hands, and many are the unmarried, seeking the peaceful blessings of the house of the Lord. Their countenances reflect much joy and satisfaction in their lives.

A major reason this church has grown from its humble beginnings to its current strength is the faithfulness and devotion of millions of humble and devoted people who have only five loaves and two small fishes to offer in the service of the Master. They have largely surrendered their own interests and in so doing have found "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). I wish only to be one of those who experience this supernal inner peace.

Effects of Jeralee Underwood's life

In the listening audience today are Jeff and Joyce Underwood of Pocatello, Idaho. They are parents of Jeralee and their other five children. Jeff works on a building maintenance team that cares

for some of our chapels in Pocatello, Idaho. Joyce is a mother and homemaker. One day last July, their daughter Jeralee, age eleven, was going door to door collecting money for her newspaper route. Jeralee never returned home—not that day, nor the next day, nor the next, nor ever.

Two thousand people from the area had gone out day after day to search for her. Other churches sent support and food for the searchers. It was learned that Jeralee had been abducted and brutally murdered by an evil man. When her body was found, the whole city was horrified and shocked. All segments of the community reached out to Joyce and Jeff in love and sympathy. Some became angry and wanted to take vengeance.

After Jeralee's body was found, Jeff and Joyce appeared with great composure before the television cameras and other media to publicly express their profound thanks to all who had helped in the search and who had extended sympathy and love. Joyce said, "I know our Heavenly Father has heard and answered our prayers, and he has brought our daughter back to us." Jeff said, "We no longer have doubt about where she is." Joyce continued, "I have learned a lot about love this week, and I also know there is a lot of hate. I have looked at the love and want to feel that love, and not the hate. We can forgive."

Elder Joe J. Christensen and I, representing the General Authorities, were among the thousands privileged to attend Jeralee's funeral service. The Holy Spirit blessed that gathering in a remarkable way and spoke peace to the souls of all who attended. Later, President Kert W. Howard, Jeralee's stake president, wrote, "The Underwoods have received letters from people both in and out of

the Church stating that they prayed for Jeralee, and they hadn't prayed in years, and because of this, they had a renewed desire to return to the Church." President Howard continued, "We will never know the extent of activation and rededication this single event has caused. Who knows the far-reaching effects Jeralee's life will have for generations untold?" Many have come into the Church because they wanted to know what kind of a religion could give the Underwoods their spiritual strength.

I mention the good coming from this tragic event with Jeralee's parents' full approval and encouragement. Their sweet daughter was like the lad who had only five barley loaves and two small fishes to give to the cause of the Savior, but by the power of God, countless thousands have been spiritually fed.

I testify that the gospel we teach is the "power of God unto salvation" for all who listen and obey (Romans 1:16), regardless of their talents and abilities, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

President Monson

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us and touched our hearts with that poignant and inspiring address. He was followed by the Relief Society Choir singing the matchless number, "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder Carlos E. Asay, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder Richard G. Scott

To be healed

Easter brings thoughts of the Savior—His life, His atonement, His resurrection, His love. He *has* risen from the dead “with healing in his wings.”¹

Oh, how we all need the healing the Redeemer can provide. Mine is a message of hope for you who yearn for relief from heavy burdens that have come through no conscious act of your own while you have lived a worthy life. It is based on principles embodied in the teachings of the Savior. Your challenge may be a serious physical disability, a struggle with lingering illness, or a daily wrestle with a life-threatening disease. It may have roots in the death of a loved one, the anguish caused by another bound by sin, or abuse in any of its evil forms. Whatever the cause, I testify that lasting relief is available on conditions established by the Lord.

Help from the Lord always follows eternal law. The better you understand that law, the easier it is to receive His help. Some of the principles upon which His healing is predicated follow.

The Lord's will in healing

It is important to understand that His healing can mean being cured, or having your burdens eased, or even coming to realize that it is worth it to endure to the end patiently, for God needs brave sons and daughters who are willing to be polished when in His wisdom that is His will.

Recognize that some challenges in life will not be resolved here on earth. Paul pled thrice that “a thorn in the flesh” be removed. The Lord simply answered, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”² He gave Paul strength to compensate so he could live a most meaningful life. He wants you to learn

how to be cured when that is His will and how to obtain strength to live with your challenge when He intends it to be an instrument for growth. In either case the Redeemer will support you. That is why He said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”³

The key to healing: humility and faith

When you feel you can do no more, temporarily lay your challenges at His feet. The scriptures tell you how. For example, when the oppressed people of Alma “did pour out their hearts to him; and he did know the thoughts of their hearts,” the Lord blessed them, saying:

“I will . . . ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that . . . you cannot feel them, . . . that ye may know . . . that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions.

“And . . . the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did *submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.*”⁴

Submitting “cheerfully and with patience” to all His will lets you learn precious if difficult lessons and eternal truths that will yield blessings.⁵ The example of Alma and Amulek is enlightening. While striving to do good among the people of Ammonihah, they were taken captive. Amulek trusted his more seasoned companion, Alma, who led him to greater confidence in the Lord. Forced to observe women and children consumed by fire, Amulek said, “Perhaps they will burn us also.” Alma answered, “*Be it according to the will of the Lord*”—a vital principle. “But . . . our work is not finished; therefore they burn us not.”⁶

The chief judge and others over many days smote, spit upon, starved, questioned, and harassed them with

mocking words and threats. Though commanded to speak, they withstood, bound and naked, in silence waiting patiently for the Lord to inspire them to act. Then "the power of God was upon Alma and Amulek, and they rose." Alma cried, "Give us strength *according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance*. And they broke the cords with which they were bound." The earth shook; the prison walls were rent. All who smote Alma and Amulek were slain, and they were freed. On another occasion Alma prayed, "O Lord . . . , have mercy on this man, and heal him *according to his faith which is in Christ*."⁸

These two examples give the essential key to healing. The Lord will give relief with divine power when you seek deliverance in humility and *faith in Jesus Christ*.

Demonstrating faith and effort

Don't say, "No one understands me; I can't sort it out or get the help I need." Those comments are self-defeating. No one can help you without faith and effort on your part.⁹ Your personal growth requires that. Don't look for a life virtually free from discomfort, pain, pressure, challenge, or grief, for those are the tools a loving Father uses to stimulate our personal growth and understanding. As the scriptures repeatedly affirm, you will be helped as you exercise *faith in Jesus Christ*.¹⁰ That faith is demonstrated by a willingness to trust His promises given through His prophets¹¹ and in His scriptures, which contain His own words. You may not fully understand how to do this yet, but trust that He will help you use your agency to open the doors for His healing to occur. Faith in Christ means we trust Him; we trust His teachings. That leads to hope, and hope brings charity, the pure love of Christ—that peaceful feeling that comes when we sense His concern, His love, and His capacity to cure us or to

ease our burdens with His healing power.

Is there a potentially destructive pattern in your life? When discouraged do you feel overwhelmed and in desperation seek for others to solve your problems, overlooking your own capacity to make much improvement? Do you understand the necessity to do what you can so that the Lord can do what He will to help you?

Healing power of prayer and scriptures

Your access to the Savior's help comes in different ways. The most direct and often the most powerful way is through humble, trusting prayers to your Father in Heaven, which are answered through the Holy Ghost to your spirit.¹² Yet this help is sometimes difficult to initiate and hard to recognize when you are learning how to pray with faith. If so, begin elsewhere. Trust someone near to you; then as you learn, that trust will extend to God and His healing.¹³ Begin with a friend or bishop who understands the teachings of the Savior. Often they have personally obtained healing through application of truth with faith in the Redeemer. They can show you how. Or start by reading, pondering, and applying the teachings of the scriptures. They are a very powerful source of assistance.¹⁴ While examples and anecdotes will help to understand principle, you will find that power comes from scriptural doctrine, as these quotes illustrate:

- "I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you."¹⁵
- "Come unto me with full purpose of heart."¹⁶
- "Return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you."¹⁷
- "Turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of mind, [and] if ye do this, he will, according to

his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage.”¹⁸

Help from priesthood leaders

Even if they had unlimited time and resources, which they don’t, priesthood leaders could not provide all of the help. They are agents of the Lord, and His law requires that you do your part. They will show you the way. They can provide priesthood blessings.¹⁹ Your faith,²⁰ purity, and obedience and that of the priesthood holder have great effect on the pronouncement and realization of the blessing. Healing can occur in the act, yet more often it occurs over a period of time determined by the faith and obedience of the individual and the will of the Lord.²¹ I feel that the pace is generally set by the individual, not by the Lord. He expects you to use other resources available, including competent professional help when indicated; then He provides the balance needed according to His will.²²

Healing power of love

Love is a potent healer. Realizing that, Satan would separate you from the power of the love of God, kindred, and friends who want to help. He would lead you to feel that the walls are pressing in around you and there is no escape or relief. He wants you to believe you lack the capacity to help yourself and that no one else is really interested. If he succeeds, you will be driven to further despair and heartache. His strategy is to have you think you are not appreciated, loved, or wanted so that you in despair will turn to self-criticism, and in the extreme even to despising yourself and feeling evil when you are not. Remember the wisdom of the Lord “is greater than the cunning of the devil.”²³ If you have such thoughts, break through those helpless feelings by reaching out in love to another in need. That may sound cruel and unfeeling

when you long so much for healing, but it is based upon truth. Paul taught, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”²⁴

Love comes by learning how to give it to another in a spirit of trust. If you feel deprived of love, that is difficult. Yet sustained concern and support of others will engender their interest and love. You will feel needed. You become an instrument through which the Lord can bless another. The Spirit will let you feel the Savior’s concern and interest, then the warmth and strength of His love. President Kimball said: “God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another mortal that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other.”²⁵

Healing power of faith

Challenge comes as testing from a wise, knowing Father to give experience, that we may be seasoned, mature, and grow in understanding and application of His truths. When you are worthy, a challenge becomes a contribution to growth, not a barrier to it. Yet no matter what the source of difficulty and no matter how you begin to obtain relief—through a qualified professional therapist, doctor, priesthood leader, friend, concerned parent, or loved one—no matter how you begin, those solutions will never provide a complete answer. The final healing comes through faith in Jesus Christ and His teachings, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and obedience to His commandments. That is why human reaction to challenge in life that engenders hatred, despondency, distrust, anger, or revenge must be supplanted by the tender mercies of a loving Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son.

Healing power of forgiveness

When anguish comes from evil acts of others, there should be punishment

and corrective action taken, but the offended is not the one to initiate that action. Leave it to others who have that responsibility. Learn to forgive; though terribly hard, it will release you and open the way to a newness of life.²⁶ Time devoted by one injured to ensure the offender is punished is time wasted in the healing process.

In summary, do what you *can* do a step at a time. Seek to understand the principles of healing from the scriptures and through prayer. Help others. Forgive. "Submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord."²⁷ Above all, *exercise faith in Jesus Christ.*

The surest path to healing

I testify that the surest, most effective, and shortest path to healing comes through application of the teachings of Jesus Christ in your life. It begins with an understanding of and appreciation for the principles of moral agency and the atonement of Jesus Christ. It leads to faith in Him and obedience to His commandments, and that brings healing.

If you are caught on a plateau of spiritual healing and don't seem to be making progress, if you seem to be constantly dependent on another mortal for support, look up in faith to Jesus Christ. I know that the Master loves you and will heal you according to your faith in Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Malachi 4:2; 2 Nephi 25:13.
2. 2 Corinthians 12:7-9.
3. Matthew 11:29-30.

4. Mosiah 24:12, 14-15; italics added.
5. See Jacob 4:10.
6. Alma 14:12-13; italics added.
7. Alma 14:26; italics added; see vv. 15-26.
8. Alma 15:10; italics added.
9. See Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974), pp. 241-42.
10. See Enos 1:15-18.
11. See Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Oct. 1969, pp. 57-60; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1969, pp. 66-69.
12. See Helaman 3:35.
13. See Ether 12:27-31.
14. See 2 Timothy 3:14-17.
15. 3 Nephi 17:8.
16. 3 Nephi 18:32.
17. 3 Nephi 9:13; see also D&C 112:13.
18. Mosiah 7:33.
19. See Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979-81), 3:28-29.
20. See *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), pp. 510-11.
21. See James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924), p. 226.
22. See *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941), p. 163.
23. D&C 10:43.
24. Galatians 6:2.
25. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 252.
26. See Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, pp. 43-46; or *Ensign*, May 1992, pp. 31-33.
27. Mosiah 24:15.

Elder Carlos E. Asay

"Can I die?"

A few years ago, I walked the halls of a care center. Most of the occupants were infirm individuals who were time-

worn and anxious to go elsewhere. In passing one of the rooms, I heard a weak cry for help. The door was slightly ajar, so I entered with the hope that I might help someone in distress. Once I was

inside, my eyes were met by a pleading look from a sweet, elderly woman in a wheelchair. She stared at me for a moment and asked, "Can I die? Can I die?"

Her tender look, soft voice, and delicate features melted my heart. The woman obviously was suffering physical pain and wanted to be released from a wasted body. She longed for the companionship of loved ones who had preceded her in death.

I don't recall exactly what I said on that occasion. But I did attempt to reassure the woman that she could and would die in the Lord's appointed time. I also tried to reassure her that she would live again, free of the infirmities that now troubled her.

The real issue: "Shall I live again?"

The real issue facing each of us is not *Can I die?* Physical death is one of life's certainties. It occurs regularly and is evidenced by the printed obituary notices and the empty chairs at our tables. For just as the sun sets at the close of each day, in accord with the eternal rhythm of life, so will we experience a temporary separation of body and spirit, whereby our tabernacles of flesh will be placed "in the cold and silent grave" (2 Nephi 1:14) and our spirits will be "taken home to that God who gave them life" (Alma 40:11).

But rather, the real issue is, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). Will the grave seal our fate forever? Or is there a resurrection and another sphere of existence awaiting our souls?

Those who believe that the grave is man's final destiny live without hope of a better world and are inclined to embrace that fatalistic approach, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" (2 Nephi 28:7; see also 1 Corinthians 15:32). This approach often leads to wanton experimentation, immoral conduct, and all the other behaviors that

reap misery and remorse of conscience (see Alma 29:5).

Those who believe in a life after death are much more inclined to lead purposeful lives. Belief in a resurrection and related truths encourages one to obey the commandments, repent of sins, serve others, and do the other things that bring joy and happiness both here and hereafter. It seems, therefore, most appropriate that we address this real issue, *Shall I live again?* on the eve of Easter—a day when Christians the world over will commemorate the resurrection of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Two classes of evidence

A noted writer referred to Christ's resurrection as "the *greatest miracle* and the most *glorious fact of history*" (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1916], p. 699; italics added).

Miracles are "manifestations of divine or spiritual power" (Bible Dictionary, p. 732). They are not simply sleight-of-hand tricks or actions contrived by clever men. They are acts wrought by individuals with powers beyond those of mortals. What could possibly be greater than the act of laying one's body down in death and picking it up again in a resurrected state as did Jesus? Only by the use of godly powers and only through the grace of God could such a marvelous thing occur.

What about the claim that the Resurrection was "the most glorious fact of history"? The facts of the Resurrection may be placed in two groups or classes. One is the cloud of witnesses who saw the resurrected Christ; the other is the army of believers, both present and past, who on the strength of personal testimonies declare with conviction, "The grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ" (Mosiah 16:8). Both classes of evidence are significant and worthy of our review.

New Testament witnesses

In the Acts of the Apostles it is recorded: "To whom also he shewed himself alive after his sufferings by many *infallible proofs*, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (JST, Acts 1:3; italics added).

Included in the cloud of witnesses or among the "infallible proofs" were hundreds of followers who saw the risen Lord on multiple occasions.

- "He appeared first to Mary Magdalene" (Mark 16:9). She saw him and heard his voice.

- He appeared to Joanna, Mary (the mother of James), "and other women that were with them" (Luke 24:10). They "held him by the feet, and worshipped him" (Matthew 28:9).

- He appeared to Peter—the one who had denied him thrice (see Luke 24:34).

- He appeared to two disciples as they went into the country (see Luke 24:13–32).

- He appeared to his beloved Apostles at least four times.

- He was seen after the Crucifixion by "above five hundred brethren at once" (1 Corinthians 15:6), according to Paul's account.

- Moreover, "the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matthew 27:52–53).

Even after all of these eyewitnesses, there were the skeptics. Some regarded the words of the women as "idle tales" (Luke 24:11). Jesus chided the two disciples by saying, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25). And he upbraided some "because they believed not them which had seen him [earlier] after he was risen" (Mark 16:14).

One wonders how anyone could doubt the actuality of the Resurrection after reading the several accounts of his appearances to the women, the disciples, and the Apostles. What greater evidence would one want than the documentation of fact provided in holy writ?

Book of Mormon witnesses

But there is more. Christ said, "The testimony of two men is true" (John 8:17). If this is a valid statement, then surely the testimony of Christ's escape from the tomb provided by a second nation must not be overlooked. I refer, of course, to the Book of Mormon record of Christ's postmortal appearances in the Western Hemisphere.

Near a temple in the land called Bountiful, some 2,500 people heard a small, piercing voice declare, "Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him" (3 Nephi 11:7). They stood in awe and experienced a change of heart as they heard God, the Eternal Father, introduce his Only Begotten Son—his means of extending the gifts of immortality and eternal life to all of his children (see John 3:16).

The multitude saw a man descending out of heaven. They heard him announce, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world" (3 Nephi 11:10). Then he invited the people to come forth one by one and see with their eyes and feel with their hands the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet (see 3 Nephi 11:14–17).

A cloud of people on two continents were eyewitnesses of the risen Christ. Thus, it can be said about this glorious fact of history, "The resurrection . . . is attested by evidence more conclusive than that upon which rests our acceptance of historical events in general" (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 699).

Personal testimonies

"Infallible proofs" of spiritual matters, such as Christ's resurrection, are not of the hand, but of the heart. They are not seen with the naked eye; they are seen through the "eye of faith" (Ether 12:19). Nor are they established by a touch of a finger. The reality of spiritual matters is confirmed by feelings stirred through the spoken or written words of God (see 1 Nephi 17:45). I say this because "the Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be" (Jacob 4:13). The Holy Spirit deals with facts, not with fancied happenings.

You will recall that the two disciples who walked and talked with Christ on the road to Emmaus did not recognize him at first. Later, however, when "their eyes were opened, and they knew him," they reflected, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:31-32).

You will also recall that Jesus said to Thomas, "Be not faithless, but believing. . . .

"Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:27, 29).

"Walk with me"

Our "eyes of faith" will also be opened, and we shall know of a surety that he lives and that we shall live again, if we believe and accept the divine invitation "Walk with me" (Moses 6:34).

- Yes, we walk with him in the desert and feel his presence when we fast, pray, and withstand temptation.

- We walk with him to Jacob's well and our hearts burn within us when we study the scriptures and drink living waters.

- We walk with him to Galilee when we teach and live the truth.

- We walk with him in Gethsemane when we assume the burdens of others.

- We walk with him to Calvary when we take up our cross by denying ourselves of "all ungodliness, and every worldly lust" (JST, Matthew 16:26; italics added).

- We suffer with him on Golgotha when we sacrifice our time, talents, and means in building up the kingdom of God.

- We rise with him to a newness of life when we seek a spiritual rebirth and strive to become his sons and daughters.

And in the process of following in his footsteps (see 1 Peter 2:21), we gain the personal conviction or infallible proof that he lives, that he is the Son of the living God, and that he is our Redeemer.

We shall live again!

I cannot go back to that sweet old woman in the wheelchair who begged, "Can I die?" She has already crossed the bridge between earth and heaven—the bridge we call death. She now knows better than I that dying and living again are established facts. She knows of a certainty that "death is not a period but a comma in the story of life" (Amos John Traver, in Jacob M. Braude, ed., *Lifetime Speaker's Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1962], 1:159), for she has gone back home and is cradled in the arms of God's love (see 2 Nephi 1:15).

Whether young or old, we need not "look upon death with any degree of terror, for [our] hope and views of Christ and the resurrection; therefore, death [is] swallowed up to [us] by the victory of Christ over it" (Alma 27:28). He is our Redeemer; he is "the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25).

I bear solemn testimony that *we shall live again!* Such testimony is founded upon the words of eyewitnesses, including modern prophets who have seen and heard the living God and the

living Christ (see D&C 76:22–24; Joseph Smith—History 1:17), and upon personal and sacred experiences of the Spirit gained in attempting to walk with God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and Elder

Carlos E. Asay of the Presidency of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Called to Serve,” following which we shall hear from Elder Albert Choules Jr. of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang “Called to Serve.”

Elder Albert Choules Jr.

Three commandments about love

The thoughts I would leave with you today center on three statements of the Savior when He was upon the earth. When asked to define “the first commandment of all,” He answered, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:28, 30). Therefore, obedience to this commandment should become our highest priority. All of our efforts should evidence love for our Father in Heaven.

Jesus indicated several ways to demonstrate the love we should have for Him and for our Heavenly Father but phrased it concisely in the simple statement, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Then our Savior added another short and easily understood statement: “Love one another” (John 13:34). Our love of God and Jesus Christ and for each other should undergird all that we do and feel. Love sincerely given brings love in return. Love so shared brings trust, support, and a level of security that is unsurpassed.

Children’s tendency to love

A child naturally nestles in the arms of his or her mother, seeking love and protection from her who gave life. That

kind of innate love seems to exemplify the commandment to love one another. Love of others seems to come so naturally to children. Their expectation of love in return seems also to be inborn.

This typical tendency of children to love became especially apparent to me on my first visit to Romania. I remember it vividly. Sister Choules and I went to various institutions with our humanitarian missionaries who were serving there. At an orphanage we saw a rather long, narrow, glass-enclosed room where twenty or so children were playing. They were about three years of age. Most of their daytime hours were spent entertaining themselves and each other, apparently with very little adult care.

I asked the supervisor if I could open the door and take some pictures. She agreed. When I opened the door, many of the children rushed out. I was reminded of days in my youth, when in like manner I saw cattle and horses rush to freedom when a corral gate was opened. These children, however, were not rushing to be free. They hungered for love. Soon we had one or more grasping at each of our legs, reaching up for the love for which they were so starved. I’ll forever have in my mind the picture I took of Sister Choules holding one of these children with their arms tightly wrapped around each other. These children just wanted to be loved and to give

love in return. These little ones and other children seem to be born with that unrestrained desire and capacity.

But as we get older, something seems to get in the way. It seems more difficult to give and receive sincere love as children do so naturally. The Lord not only said "love one another," but He prefaced those words with, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." Then He taught the kind of love that we should cultivate when He added, "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34).

Develop a child's love matured

Often I have wondered, Why do we as adults have to be commanded to do that which comes so naturally to children? Perhaps that is why Christ said that each of us should strive to become as a little child, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).

The kingdom of heaven for which we strive can begin with a heavenly life here and now. We can develop a child's love matured. President David O. McKay said:

"I know of no other place than home where more happiness can be found in this life. It is possible to make home a bit of heaven; indeed, I picture heaven to be a continuation of the ideal home. Some man has said: 'Home filled with contentment is one of the highest hopes of this life'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, p. 5; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, p. 520).

How do we make our home the ideal home and the proper prelude to heaven? I believe we start with the Savior's admonition to keep His commandments and to do so specifically within the walls of our own home. Husband and wife—father and mother—set the example and tone for all that happens within the home. Hopefully, the relationship starts at a sacred altar in a holy temple. There they kneel, knowing that they are both

worthy of that sacred privilege. They are prepared and desirous of entering into sacred covenants—to put each other and the goal of being together in heaven first in their lives. Selfishness is to be put aside. They begin a partnership—a full partnership—that is to be eternal.

Unrighteous dominion

In recent years I have become aware of too many instances in which a man particularly has tried to dominate and exercise unrighteous dominion simply because he has convinced himself that it is his male role. Some mistakenly declare that it is right because they hold the priesthood. Nothing could be further from the truth. The sacred declaration in section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants belies that erroneous concept. The scripture states clearly:

"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

"By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

"Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

"That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death" (D&C 121:41–44).

In contrast, a thoughtless and domineering man may mock the phrase "reproving betimes with sharpness." Indeed he may reprove sharply, oftentimes with raised voice, mouthing vulgar words and phrases, even punctuated with vile physical acts or other kinds of abuse. Forgotten is the qualifier: "when moved upon by the Holy Ghost." No abusive act would have the sanction of heaven, much less take origin from there. Such a man also

seems to have forgotten that not long ago he knelt at a sacred altar and covenanted with his sweet companion and with God to keep all of the Lord's commandments.

No man—particularly one who bears the priesthood—has the right to treat any woman unkindly, especially his wife, with whom he would hope to share eternal joy. Certainly unrighteous dominion cannot be excused upon the mistaken notion that permission comes by being the husband, head of the family, and particularly under the umbrella or authority of the priesthood. The scripture is clear that when sacred authority is abused, the authority of the priesthood is withdrawn (see D&C 121:34–37).

Leading in love

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve emphasized this at the last October conference. He said:

"Any man who claims the special powers of heaven for his own selfish purposes and seeks to use the priesthood in any degree of unrighteousness in the Church or in the home simply does not understand the nature of his authority. Priesthood is for service, not servitude; compassion, not compulsion; caring, not control. Those who think otherwise are operating outside the parameters of priesthood authority.

"Thankfully, most of our fathers and priesthood officers lead with love, just as most of our mothers and auxiliary leaders do. Leadership based on love brings incredible power. It is real, and it generates lasting results in the lives of our Father's children" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, p. 105; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, p. 78).

Love between husband and wife

Paul taught succinctly, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for

it" (Ephesians 5:25). When true love prevails between husband and wife, they want to give themselves to and for each other, as Christ gave of Himself. We give for each other on a daily basis when we endeavor always to make each other happy. Then we give up thinking selfishly of ourselves and our personal needs. Then we really think not only of the here and now but of the hereafter.

The Savior has told us that if we marry "by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, . . . and if ye abide in my covenant, . . . it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever" (D&C 132:19). These are the great and marvelous blessings of exaltation, glory, and eternal life. They are sealed upon us only in the holy temples. They can indeed be ours. With that eternal perspective, only loving thoughts and actions should prevail in our homes, where we help each other along the road to exaltation. That perspective not only prepares us for eternity, but it makes the here and now much happier and more fulfilling.

I have watched the Brethren, those who understand the rights of the priesthood and the needs of eternity perhaps more clearly than anyone. I have watched how they speak of and treat their sweethearts. They give us an example of love, respect, and kindness that we would do well to emulate.

Children follow parents' example

Children learn to copy the patterns of their parents. If parents honor the Sabbath day, if they go to church, if they serve faithfully in their callings with

no criticism of leaders, if they heed the Word of Wisdom, if they cheerfully pay their tithes and offerings, if they honor covenants made in the temple, and if other commandments are lived and taught, children will receive a priceless foundation. Sons and daughters will treat their wives and husbands in the future as they see their parents treat each other. We can indeed make our home a bit of heaven here, as President McKay stated. We also set the groundwork for our children's homes to be so too.

I love my wife, Marilyn, so very much and am so grateful for her, for the years we have had together, and for her love given to me in so many ways. She is a marvelous wife and mother and grandmother and a faithful servant of the Lord in her own right. My daily prayer includes feelings of gratitude for her and a plea that I might be the kind of husband that I should be and want to be. I'm grateful for

our children and our grandchildren and the love that we share together.

I bear my witness that God and Jesus Christ live and that if we will love them and keep their commandments and love each other—particularly our companions and our children—we will be happier here and more secure eternally. I'm grateful for these great Brethren who lead us, and I testify of their sacred callings. I'm grateful for and humbled by the opportunity and blessing of serving with them. I pray for them and for each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Albert Choules Jr. of the Seventy has spoken to us.

Sister Elaine L. Jack, general president of the Relief Society, will now speak to us, and she will be followed by Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen of the Seventy.

Sister Elaine L. Jack

I stand before you today grateful for our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, grateful for this gospel, grateful for the priesthood that blesses our lives and for the goodness of all of you. This gathering of Saints at general conference reminds me of the joyous proclamation "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). Righteous Saints are the glory of God, and there are mighty legions gathered here and in many lands.

"Walk with me"

Before we came to this earth, we shouted for joy at the opportunity to take this leap of faith in our eternal progression. When we were baptized, we stepped firmly onto the path to eternal life. The prophet Nephi said:

"After ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? . . . Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him. . . .

"Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ. . . .

" . . . Behold, . . . this is the way" (2 Nephi 31:19–21).

How do we press forward on the straight and narrow way? How do we focus on our eternal progression when we live in a world that demands such attention to daily tasks? How do we remain steadfast when so much around us is laden with sin? The people in Enoch's day faced these same challenges. Enoch began his ministry preaching to an unrighteous audience, but the people softened their hearts and heeded the words of the Lord to "walk with me" (Moses 6:34).

So can we.

The journey of eternal progression

Our eternal progression on that straight and narrow path in the company of the Lord Jesus Christ is the focus of my message today. This is a journey made up of many steps. Our progress on this journey is determined by recognizing the straight and narrow path, having an eternal perspective, and acting accordingly.

Remember, our eternal progression is the very essence of our earthly existence. It is the Lord's plan to get us all the way home to our Father in Heaven. This I know: Each of us can get there from here.

President Spencer W. Kimball promised, "It may seem a little difficult at first, but when a person begins to catch a vision of the true work, when he begins to see something of eternity in its true perspective, the blessings begin to far outweigh the cost of leaving 'the world' behind" ("The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign*, June 1976, p. 6).

The straight and narrow path

Some of our steps come in learning that the path is indeed straight and narrow. The concept of a straight path intrigues me. So often we go around in a circle, spinning our spiritual wheels while only our temporal treads hit the road. That seems out of step and out of balance with the way the Lord intended. We have knowledge and spiritual power; such momentum far exceeds anything the world has to offer. Putting off until tomorrow is to fall behind, step backward, and open the door to the subtle influences of Satan. "There is no such thing as standing still in the eternal work of our God" (George Q. Cannon, *Milennial Star*, 23 Feb. 1899, p. 117).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said: "There are no separate paths back to that heavenly home. Just one straight and narrow way, at the end of which,

though we arrive trailing tears, we shall at once be 'drenched in joy'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, p. 15; or *Ensign*, May 1978, p. 11).

Indeed, the path is not soft, green grass; it is not without hardship and heartache. It is often an uphill climb strewn with rocks, many of them in the shape of mighty boulders. We can't predict what our challenges will be because our lives are all different. Though the path is narrow, our moves are not scripted. There are diversions which attempt to lure us from the straight and narrow. It is our covenants that are the road signs to eternal life. Just as it is more difficult to read the signs on the main road from a side street, so too it is more difficult to hear the still, small voice warning of rough road ahead when we have distanced ourselves from our covenants.

Develop spirituality

When the Lord says "walk with me" (Moses 6:34), He is asking us to become more spiritual by being obedient to His word. Developing spirituality is critical to our eternal progress.

Our prophet has spoken for the Lord in our day, and his messages have been explicit: rid your heart of pride; read the Book of Mormon every day. In following that counsel, I discover new insights suddenly appearing in my Book of Mormon which are so pertinent to my immediate needs.

We've been given tools to develop that spirituality. We are told to attend Church meetings, work hard in callings, go to the temple, be generous in offerings to the Lord, hold family home evening, and visit one another. But simply being there does not sanctify us; statistics do not drive eternal progression. Still, we cannot ignore that being in the right place at the right time will put us in a frame of mind to learn, in an

environment where the Lord's influence is invited and strong.

Alma described what happens when we are not only present but counted as Christ's disciples when he said: "Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?" (Alma 5:14). Have ye "felt to sing the song of redeeming love?" (Alma 5:26). Spirituality is all about feeling the Spirit of God, wanting it with us, sharing the Spirit with others, and heeding its prompting.

Serve and be charitable

Finally, progressing along the straight and narrow is characterized by making the Lord's work our work, serving as He would. Such work is grounded in charity, a principle that Relief Society sisters have embraced for many years, for "charity never faileth" (1 Corinthians 13:8). Charity helps us maintain our footing when all around us are skidding about.

Priscilla Samson-Davis, a sister in Ghana, has known struggles. There have been many rocks on the path of her life. As a teacher she has watched families nurse children through dysentery and malaria, work hard, barter daily for sacks of rice, onions, tomatoes—any food to keep their loved ones alive. She serves as a visiting teacher, regularly traveling on the bus to see a sister on the other side of town. When asked if this task were a burden, given all she had to manage, she simply replied, "It's not hard. The woman I visit can't read. When I go, I read the scriptures to her."

Her simple answer testified of the faith and assurance she had that she was on the proper path. Though her bus route was halting and likely wound up and down streets, in the Lord's eyes it was truly straight and narrow, for she was going in the right direction. She was about her Father's business. She exemplified the spirit described by President

Ezra Taft Benson when he said, "The best measure of true greatness is how Christlike we are" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 100; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 78).

A bishop teaches members to read

Without question, those progressing eternally are those on the straight and narrow; they are spiritual and charitable. A bishop in the Dominican Republic exemplifies such a life. After sacrament meeting in his ward, a new convert approached him and said, "Bishop, I notice that the members are always looking at books when they sing. I want to do that. They look at books in Sunday School class. I want to do that." Quietly the brother said, "Bishop, I want to be a good member. I want to do all the Lord's work. But I can't read. Is there someone who can teach me?"

"Yes," said the bishop. And then he tried to think of a likely tutor. He found himself saying, "I'll teach you to read."

For many months this new convert and his wife met weekly with the bishop. They learned to read using the scriptures. Now this was a busy bishop, like they all are. He could have delegated the responsibility, but the Spirit had prompted him to take the assignment. They became friends in the gospel as they studied together. After two years the bishop was released and a new bishop called. Sustained to follow him as the leader of the ward was his student of the scriptures. This bishop set out to teach his friends how to read the gospel message, and in the process he showed them how to live it. Could this bishop have seen the end when he began? How often do we follow the dictums of the Lord and in doing so influence eternity?

A sure path

Focusing on our eternal purposes can ease our burdens and make our lives

happy and more productive. Indeed, we often can do less and have it mean more.

In Luke we read of Martha receiving Jesus into her home. Her sister Mary "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving" (Luke 10:39-40), and she complained that Mary did not help her. Did Jesus urge Mary to rush back to the tasks of the day? No. "Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, . . . thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part" (vv. 41-42). The message holds true today: Choose the Lord's way, for it is glory everlasting.

We know why we are here. When we are on the path, we can feel it. The fruits

of eternal progress are manifest in joy, peace, love, hope, and increased confidence in the Lord. Though the path is narrow, it is sure. It is on this path that we testify daily of our love for the Lord, His children, His church, His counsel, and the richness of His blessings. By our good works we magnify what is mighty in us all, one step at a time, one day at a time, all the time.

We know the path; in fact, we know it well. The prophet Nephi promised, "If ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20). May it be so. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen

Observations about healing

Following Elder Scott's masterful address on healing, I would like to add a few observations by someone whose entire professional life was that of a healer. As a practicing physician for over forty years, I've had occasion to see many patients who were sick or who had sustained injuries to their bodies. I hereby make an admission: physicians do not cure patients. This marvelous and complicated machine we call the human body has built into it its own wonderful healing mechanism. All a physician can do is provide a good healing environment.

I soon learned in my medical practice that the ultimate healing process for an injured or sick body was already provided by our Heavenly Father. I also learned that a patient's attitude has much to do with healing. Those who would rely on Heavenly Father and exercise faith in the power of priesthood often enjoyed faster recoveries.

I have witnessed miracles! Many times when my medical training suggested a dismal prognosis, I have seen

individuals fully recover. I have also witnessed others who relied with faith on the Lord and sought blessings with their prayers, which were not answered in a way the person or loved one desired.

A condition for healing

The Lord has given a condition for healing blessings: "He that hath faith in me to be healed, and *is not appointed unto death*, shall be healed" (D&C 42:48; italics added). Even when a person relies on faith in the Lord for blessings, if it is his or her appointed time to die, there will not be restoration of health. Indeed, "death [must come] upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator" (2 Nephi 9:6). President Spencer W. Kimball has written:

"If all the sick for whom we pray were healed, if all the righteous were protected and the wicked destroyed, the whole program of the Father would be annulled. . . . No man would have to live by faith. . . . There would be little or no suffering, sorrow, disappointment, or even death, and if these were not, there

would also be no joy, success, resurrection, nor eternal life" (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972], p. 97).

Spiritual healing

As in my medical practice when I assisted sick patients, my assignment now is to assist individuals who have seriously sinned to repent and be restored to full fellowship in the gospel by following a "prescription" provided by the Lord. In this assignment I have witnessed much sorrow, remorse, pain, and suffering because individuals have transgressed laws that our Heavenly Father provided for our happiness. I have also seen great sorrow come to families because of the sin of a transgressor in that family. I have seen repeatedly what all of us should already know—that there is no happiness in sin.

The only one who can accomplish the healing of a sick soul is the Great Physician Himself, our Father in Heaven, through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus promised those who will come to Him with full purpose of heart and repent, "I shall heal them" (3 Nephi 18:32). The Church cannot heal; priesthood leaders do not heal; only an omnipotent God can accomplish the miracle of spiritual healing.

A prescription for spiritual healing

May I take just a few moments to discuss what an individual can do to assist in the spiritual healing process when one's soul has become tainted with sin.

Our eight-year-old granddaughter was busy at work recently making cookies. She was following a recipe given to her by her mother but was stymied by one ingredient that was to be added to the recipe. It called for two teaspoons of soda. She asked her parents, "Does it matter if it's root beer or 7-Up soda?" When the cookies were baked, they tasted awful. Her mother concluded

that the recipe had failed because her daughter had misinterpreted a half teaspoon of salt to be a half cup of salt.

If the ingredients in the recipe for cookies are important, how much more important are the ingredients in the prescription for spiritual healing? And how much more important is it that we not misinterpret those instructions, as was done with the cookies?

A divine prescription for this healing has been given by our Heavenly Father. It has eternally significant implications. I restate the ingredients of this prescription as the Lord has given them to His servants and to us as His children.

1. Diagnose the cause of the malady

The first ingredient is an acknowledgment of the cause of the spiritual malady. In the healing of the physical body we call this the diagnosis, and it would come after a careful history and physical examination. In spiritual healing it is called confession. A careful examination of our spiritual self on a regular basis is not only worthwhile but necessary. Confession of one's sins is always necessary with serious transgressions (see D&C 58:43). A good start is the interview with our bishop for a temple recommend. That in itself is not unlike a history taken by a physician before diagnosing.

Where do we stand with the Lord? Are we happy with our own spirituality? Do we like what we see? Is the Holy Ghost our companion in life? Do we recognize the promptings of the Holy Spirit? The answers to these and other similar self-examination questions may help us to diagnose any spiritual illness we may have.

2. Feel contrition and remorse

The second ingredient is a deep contrition and remorse for any wrongdoing we may find. The Savior mentions this

when He says: "And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 9:20).

I feel certain that the more we are successful in drawing close to Heavenly Father, the more our own blemishes will be apparent to us. The Lord has instructed us, "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me" (D&C 88:63).

Yet sorrow and sadness by themselves do not constitute a spiritual cure. They almost always accompany sin and transgression, however.

3. Seek and offer forgiveness

A third ingredient is to seek forgiveness from those whom one has hurt by transgression. And they in turn must forgive, as the Lord has so forcefully stated: "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (D&C 64:10).

Recently there came over my desk the poignant words of a father who had erred years ago and who was repentant. He agonized as he related that his sons and daughters refused to forgive him, even to the point of refusing to talk to him or see him in person after more than five years. The Lord tells us in Doctrine and Covenants 64:9, "Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin."

I wonder if there might indeed remain with those children the greater sin.

I've seen many examples in my current assignment of those who just don't seem to be able to forgive another person or to put their own sins behind them. This surely is one of the more important ingredients in spiritual healing.

4. Abandon sin

A fourth ingredient: There must be total abandonment of the sin. All too often I see those who have repented slip sometime later into their old sinful ways. When that happens, sins that were previously repented of return to those who perhaps did not really repent after all. We read, "I, the Lord, will not lay any sin to your charge; go your ways and sin no more; but unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return, saith the Lord your God" (D&C 82:7).

5. Comply with all the commandments

A fifth ingredient: There must be compliance with *all* the commandments of God. This means that those guilty of serious transgressions haven't really repented until they become full-tithe payers, fully overcome Word of Wisdom problems, are morally clean, and keep the Sabbath day holy.

6. Plead for the Lord's forgiveness

Sixth, one must plead to the Lord for mercy, strength, and forgiveness until one receives through the Holy Ghost a "peace of conscience" (Mosiah 4:3). This is the essence of the atonement of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When King Benjamin had completed his sermon, he looked "round about on the multitude, and behold they had fallen to the earth. . . . And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified" (Mosiah 4:1-2).

Then "the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins" (v. 3). Ultimate forgiveness comes from the Lord to the repentant individual. He

or she knows by the power of the Holy Ghost when forgiveness has come.

7. Endure faithfully

The final ingredient, number seven: There must be faithfulness and service throughout the rest of one's mortal life.

These seven ingredients provide the prescription for spiritual healing and allow us to come to the Lord with "full purpose of heart" (D&C 17:1). The prophet Nephi explained what that was: "I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, . . . behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; . . . and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel" (2 Nephi 31:13).

Testimony of Jesus' healing power

I urge any who are in need of such spiritual healing to follow this divine prescription from the Savior. Come to Him. Acknowledge your sins. Fully repent. Permit priesthood leaders to assist you. Be long-suffering and patient. Plead that the Savior's atonement will be efficacious for you. Then permit Him

to heal you. We sing a hymn that explains it well:

Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish;

Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel.

Here bring your wounded hearts; here tell your anguish.

Earth has no sorrow that heav'n cannot heal.

["Come, Ye Disconsolate," *Hymns*, no. 115]

I testify that while there are physical ailments that are not healed, all spiritual illness can be healed because of the atonement of Jesus Christ. If we will but use the God-given ingredients to cause such healing, it will happen. I testify of His healing power and promise that His prescription is the only cure for peace, happiness, and rest to one's soul. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Sister Elaine L. Jack, general Relief Society president, and Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen of the Seventy have just addressed us.

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

The Church's support of the family

A family begins when a young man and woman are drawn to one another by an irresistible force of nature. They offer to one another that which distinguishes him as male and her as female, and they want, above all else, to find the one with whom they can completely express their love. They want to have children—to be a family.

These compelling forces of nature should not be resisted, only approached cautiously, protecting those life-generating powers until promises have been made to one another, covenants made with the Lord, and a legal ceremony performed, witnessed, and recorded.

Then, and only then, as husband and wife, man and woman, may they join together in that expression of love through which life is created.

The ultimate purpose of every teaching, every activity in the Church is that parents and their children are happy at home, sealed in an eternal marriage, and linked to their generations.

Satan's attacks on the family

The ultimate purpose of the adversary, who has "great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time,"¹ is to disrupt, disturb, and destroy the home and the family. Like a ship without a rudder, without a compass, we drift from the family values which have anchored us in the past. Now we are caught in a current so strong that unless we correct our course, civilization as we know it will surely be wrecked to pieces.

Moral values are being neglected and prayer expelled from public schools on the pretext that moral teaching belongs to religion. At the same time, atheism, the secular religion, is admitted to class, and our youngsters are proselyted to a conduct without morality.

The family must endure

World leaders and court judges agree that the family must endure if we are to survive. At the same time, they use the words *freedom* and *choice* as tools to pry apart the safeguards of the past and loosen up the laws on marriage, abortion, and gender. In so doing, they promote the very things which threaten the family.

None of this is new. Jacob, the Book of Mormon prophet, told the people of Nephi:

"I . . . am weighed down with much more desire and anxiety for the welfare of your souls than I have hitherto been. . . .

" . . . It grieveth me that I must use so much boldness of speech concerning you, before your wives and your children, many of whose feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God."²

Prophetic preparation for the crisis

This crisis of the family is no surprise to the Church. We have certainly known what was coming.

I know of no better testimony that we are led by prophets than our preparation for this present emergency.

The scriptures speak of prophets as "watch[men] upon the tower" who see "the enemy while he [is] yet afar off"³ and who have "beheld also things which were not visible to the natural eye . . . [for] a seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people."⁴

Thirty-three years ago the Brethren warned us of the disintegration of the family and told us to prepare. It was announced by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that the Church would be restructured.

The weekly family home evening was introduced by the First Presidency, who said that "the home [is] the basis of a righteous life and . . . no other instrumentality can take its place nor fulfil its essential functions."⁵

Parents are provided with excellent materials for teaching their children, with a promise that the faithful will be blessed.⁶

While the doctrines and revealed organization remain unchanged, all agencies of the Church have been reshaped in their relationship to one another and to the home.

So sweeping were those changes that the entire curriculum of the Church was overhauled—based on scriptures, with excellent manuals for each course.

And years were spent preparing new editions of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. Except for correcting printing errors and adding three revelations to the Doctrine and Covenants, the scriptural text remains unchanged.

Cross-references and other helps were added to make the scriptures more

accessible. In the Topical Guide, for instance, under the heading "Jesus Christ" there are eighteen pages—small print, single-spaced—the most comprehensive compilation of scriptural references on the Lord that has ever been compiled in the history of the world.

The new editions of the scriptures are complete in English and Spanish, and work is now under way in dozens of languages.

We can only imagine where we would be if we were just now reacting to this terrible redefinition of the family. But that is not the case. We are not casting frantically about, trying to decide what to do. We know what to do and what to teach.

The family is very much alive and well in the Church. Hundreds of thousands of happy families face life with an unwavering faith in the future.

The Brethren know and care

The course we follow is not of our own making. The plan of salvation, the great plan of happiness, was revealed to us, and the prophets and Apostles continue to receive revelation as the Church and its members stand in need of more.

We, like Jacob, must teach "according to the strict commands of God," "notwithstanding the greatness of the task." Like Jacob, we also run the risk of enlarging "the wounds of those who are already wounded, instead of consoling and healing their wounds."⁷

When we speak plainly of divorce, abuse, gender identity, contraception, abortion, parental neglect, we are thought by some to be way out of touch or to be uncaring. Some ask if we know how many we hurt when we speak plainly. Do we know of marriages in trouble, of the many who remain single, of single-parent families, of couples unable to have children, of parents with wayward children, or of those confused

about gender? Do we know? Do we care?

Those who ask have no idea how much we care; you know little of the sleepless nights, of the endless hours of work, of prayer, of study, of travel—all for the happiness and redemption of mankind.

Because we *do* know and because we *do* care, we must teach the rules of happiness without dilution, apology, or avoidance. That is our calling.

I once learned a valuable lesson from a mission Relief Society president. In a conference, she announced some tightening up of procedures. A sister stood up and defiantly said, "Those rules can't apply to us! You don't understand us! We are an exception."

That wonderful Relief Society president replied, "Dear sister, we'd like not to take care of the exception first. We will establish the rule first, and then we'll see to the exception." Many times I have borrowed from her wisdom, grateful for what she taught me.

To the men of the Church

Now, following the example of Jacob, I speak to the men of the Church. Most of you are worthy fathers and husbands who do what you should do. But there are women whose hearts have been broken⁸ and children who are neglected, even abused.

If we are to help them, we must begin with the men. The next series of stake and regional conferences will be devoted to teaching the doctrines and principles of responsible and worthy manhood.

Some of you had no worthy example to follow and now visit the abuse or neglect of your own parents upon your wife and children.

Brethren, do you understand that we emphasize the teaching of the scriptures because they are the constant? From them we learn the purposes of life, the

gifts of the Spirit. From them we learn about personal revelation, how to discern good from evil, truth from error. The scriptures provide the pattern and the basis for correct doctrine.

From doctrine, we learn principles of conduct, how to respond to problems of everyday living, even to failures, for they too are provided for in the doctrines.

If you understand the great plan of happiness and follow it, what goes on in the world will not determine your happiness. You will be tried, for that is part of the plan, but "thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high."⁹

Your responsibility as a father and a husband transcends any other interest in life. It is unthinkable that a Latter-day Saint man would cheat on his wife or abandon the children he has fathered, or neglect or abuse them.

The Lord has "commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth."¹⁰

You are responsible, unless disabled, to provide temporal support for your wife and children.¹¹ You are to devote, even sacrifice, yourself to the bringing up of your children in light and truth.¹²

That requires perfect moral fidelity to your wife, with no reason ever for her to doubt your faithfulness.

Never should there be a domineering or unworthy behavior in the tender, intimate relationship between husband and wife.¹³

Your wife is your partner in the leadership of the family and should have full knowledge of and full participation in all decisions relating to your home.

Lead your family to the Church, to the covenants and ordinances. We are trying to reduce the length and number of meetings and activities outside of the home.

"I not a monkey, Daddy"

I cannot express the depth of my devotion to my wife and children, their companions, and their children. I have learned more by far from them than they from me. That learning comes in ordinary experiences, the joy and the pain of everyday life.

I learned from a little boy the identity and value of a human soul. Some years ago, two of our little boys were wrestling on the rug. They had reached that pitch where laughter turns to tears. I worked a foot gently between them and lifted the older boy (then just four) to a sitting position on the rug, saying, "Hey, there, you monkeys, you'd better settle down."

He folded his little arms and looked at me with surprising seriousness. His little boy feelings had been hurt, and he protested, "I not a monkey, Daddy; I a person."

I was overwhelmed with love for him. I realized he was a child of God. How much I wanted him to be "a person"—one of eternal worth. From such ordinary experiences I have learned to understand doctrine. "Children," truly, "are an heritage of the Lord."¹⁴

The family is safe within the Church

The family is safe within the Church. We are not in doubt as to the course we must follow. It was given in the beginning, and guidance from on high is renewed as need may be.

As we continue on our course, these things will follow as night the day:

The distance between the Church and a world set on a course which we cannot follow will steadily increase.

Some will fall away into apostasy, break their covenants, and replace the plan of redemption with their own rules.

Across the world, those who now come by the tens of thousands will in-

evitably come as a flood to where the family is safe. Here they will worship the Father in the name of Christ, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, and know that the gospel is the great plan of happiness, of redemption, of which I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Revelation 12:12.
2. Jacob 2:3, 7; see vv. 1–13.
3. D&C 101:54; see vv. 45, 53–54; 2 Kings 9:17.
4. Moses 6:36; see also Mosiah 8:15–17.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1961, p. 79; or *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1962, p. 36.
6. See “Message from the First Presidency,” *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), p. iv.
7. Jacob 2:9–10.
8. See Jacob 2:35.
9. D&C 121:7–8.
10. D&C 93:40; see vv. 36–40.
11. See D&C 83:2.
12. See D&C 93:40.

13. See D&C 121:41–43.

14. Psalm 127:3.

President Monson

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has concluded this first session of the conference.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of the conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Relief Society Choir from the Olympus Utah Region will now sing “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.” The benediction will be given by Elder Jorge A. Rojas of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

The choir sang “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.”

Elder Jorge A. Rojas offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 164th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 2, 1994, at 2:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Linda Margetts at the organ.

President Hinckley made the following remarks at the beginning of the meeting.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to this second session of the 164th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We excuse President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference on television.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world, where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We express our gratitude to the owners and operators of these various properties, who are accommodating us so generously.

We note that Elders Neal A. Maxwell, Joseph C. Muren, and John M. Madsen are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Rulon G. Craven and Kwok Yuen Tai are attending the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will begin by singing "Sweet Hour of Prayer," and the invocation will then be offered by Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

Elder Gene R. Cook offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief." President Thomas S. Monson will then present the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The chorus sang "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief."

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My dear brothers and sisters, I shall now present to you the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

We pay tribute to Elder Marvin J. Ashton, a member of the Council of the Twelve, who passed away 25 February 1994.

It is proposed that we sustain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that council:

Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, and Robert D. Hales. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Cree-L Kofford, who has been serving as a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Those in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: Claudio R. Mendes Costa, W. Don Ladd, James

O. Mason, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and Lance B. Wickman. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

In view of the call of Bishop Robert D. Hales as a member of the Council of the Twelve, it becomes necessary to release him as the Presiding Bishop. Those who wish to join us in a vote of appreciation to Bishop Hales and his Counselors, H. David Burton and Richard C. Edgley, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Merrill J. Bateman as Presiding Bishop, with H. David Burton as First Counselor and Richard C. Edgley as Second Counselor. Simultaneously, we release Elder Bateman as a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative.

We now invite the newly sustained member of the Twelve, members of the Seventy, and Presiding Bishop to take their places on the stand.

President Hinckley

Brother Ted E. Davis, chairman of the Church Audit Committee, will now read the auditors' report; and then Brother Michael F. Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, will present the statistical report for the year 1993.

The Church Audit Committee Report for 1993

Ted E. Davis

The Church Audit Committee is independent of all Church officers, operations, departments, and employees and reports directly to the First Presidency. We have access to all operational and departmental records and personnel necessary to perform our responsibility. We have reviewed the adequacy of controls over receipts and expenditures of funds and other procedures that safeguard the assets of the Church and its controlled organizations, including their budgeting, accounting and reporting, and auditing systems. We have also reviewed the related combined financial statements of the Church for the year ended 31 December 1993.

Expenditures of Church funds for the year were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes, composed of the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation. The Appropriation and Bud-

get committees administer major expenditures within approved budgets.

The Church Auditing Department performs, on a test basis, financial and operational audits, including computerized information systems, for all Church operations worldwide. Its staff consists of certified public accountants and other professionally qualified auditors, and it is independent of all other Church operations and departments. Incorporated businesses owned or controlled by the Church are audited by the Church Auditing Department or independent public accounting firms. Audits of local ecclesiastical units are performed locally. Such local audit procedures are established by the Church Auditing Department, which also monitors local unit audit results.

Based on our review of financial and operating controls and of audit reports and responses thereto, we are of the opinion that the budgeting, accounting and reporting, auditing, and other control procedures have maintained ad-

equate accountability for Church assets and obligations. In all material respects, Church funds received and expended during the year ended 31 December 1993 have been controlled, accounted for, and reported in accordance with established Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,
Church Audit Committee
Ted E. Davis, Chairman
Donald D. Salmon
James B. Jacobson

The Church Statistical Report for 1993

F. Michael Watson

For the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of 31 December 1993. The statistics are based on 1993 reports available prior to this conference.

Church units

Stakes	1,968
Districts	647
Missions	295
Wards and branches	21,002
Nations and territories with organized wards or branches	149

Church membership

Total membership	8,696,224
Eight-year-old children of record baptized during 1993 ...	76,312
Converts baptized during 1993 ..	304,808

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries	48,708
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Prominent members who have passed away since last April

Elder Marvin J. Ashton, member of the Council of the Twelve; David

Lawrence McKay, former general superintendent of the Sunday School; Joseph Taylor Bentley, former general president of the Young Men Mutual Improvement Association; Keith Engar, former chairman of the Church Activity Committee; D. Arthur Haycock, former secretary to five Presidents of the Church; and Helena May Williams Larson Allen, former secretary to three Young Women Mutual Improvement Association general presidencies.

President Hinckley

Thank you, brethren, for those very important reports.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve will be our first speaker this afternoon.

I should say that Brother Ballard serves on the Utah Statehood Centennial Commission, which is making preparation for the 100th anniversary of Utah becoming a state, that anniversary occurring in 1996. The governor and Brother Ballard are asking that on May 14, 1994, we have a cleanup day in the state to make the state sparkle. This is 1994, and the centennial is 1996. I've seen some yards that I think could take two years to clean up!

Elder M. Russell Ballard

A well-tuned engine

Before I was called as a General Authority, I was in the automobile business, as was my father before me. Through the years I learned to appreciate the sound and the performance of a well-tuned engine. To me it is almost musical, from the gentle purring of an idling motor to the vibrant roar of a throttle that is fully open. The power that sound represents is even more exciting. Nothing is quite the same as sitting behind the wheel of a fine automobile when the engine is operating at peak performance with the assembled parts working together in perfect harmony.

On the other hand, nothing is more frustrating than a car engine that is not running properly. No matter how beautiful the paint or comfortable the furnishings inside are, a car with an engine that is not operating as it should is just a shell of unrealized potential. An automobile engine will run on only a part of its cylinders, but it never will go as far or as fast, nor will the ride be as smooth, as when it is tuned properly.

The one-cylinder ward

Unfortunately, some wards in the Church are hitting on only a few cylinders, including some that are trying to make do with just one. The one-cylinder ward is the ward where the bishop handles all of the problems, makes all of the decisions, and follows through on all of the assignments. Then, like an overworked cylinder in a car engine, he is soon burned out.

Our bishops have heavy demands placed upon them. They—and they alone—hold certain keys, and only they can fulfill certain responsibilities. But they are not called to be all things, at all times, to all people. They are called to preside and to lead and to extend God's

love to His children. Our Heavenly Father does not expect them to do everything by themselves.

The same is true of our stake presidents, priesthood quorum and auxiliary presidents, and, for that matter, mothers and fathers. All have stewardships that require large amounts of their time, talent, and energy. But none is left to do it alone. God, the Master Organizer, has inspired the creation of a system of committees and councils. If understood and put to proper use, this system will decrease the burden on all individual leaders and will extend the reach and the impact of their ministry through the combined help of others.

Make wise use of councils

Six months ago I stood at this pulpit and talked about the importance of the council system in the Church. I spoke about the great spiritual power and inspired direction that come from properly conducted family, ward, and stake councils. The Spirit continues to bear witness to me of how vital efficiently run Church councils are to the accomplishment of the mission of the Church. For that reason, I have been anxious to see how well my remarks in October were understood, particularly by our faithful and diligent bishops.

During training sessions I have conducted in various locations since last general conference, I have focused attention on the ward council. As part of that training, I invited a ward council to participate. I gave to the bishop a theoretical problem about a less-active family and asked him to use the ward council to develop a plan to activate this family.

Without exception, the bishop took charge of the situation immediately and said, "Here's the problem, and here's what I think we should do to solve it."

Then he made assignments to the various ward council members. This was a good exercise in delegation, I suppose, but it did not even begin to use the experience and wisdom of council members to address the problem.

Eventually I asked the bishop to try again, only this time to solicit ideas and recommendations from his council members before making any assignments. I especially encouraged him to ask the sisters for their ideas. When the bishop opened the meeting to council members and invited them to counsel together, the effect was like opening the floodgates of heaven. A reservoir of insight and inspiration suddenly began to flow between council members as they planned for fellowshiping the less-active family.

As I watched this same scenario played out before me time after time during the past six months, I decided that it would not be out of order to speak about the importance of councils once again. I speak not to scold those who did not give serious attention last time, but because we have an urgent need in the Church for leaders, particularly stake presidents and bishops, to harness and channel spiritual power through councils. Family, ward, and stake problems can be solved if we seek solutions in the Lord's way.

In my experience, lives are blessed when leaders make wise use of committees and councils. They move the work of the Lord forward much faster and farther, like a fine automobile operating at peak efficiency. Committee and council members are unified. Together they experience a much more pleasant trip along the highway of Church service.

Three ward committees and councils

For my purpose today, let me review three ward committees and councils that always should follow a prearranged agenda.

First is the *priesthood executive committee*. It consists of the bishopric, high priests group leader, elders quorum president, ward mission leader, Young Men president, ward executive secretary, and ward clerk. This committee meets weekly under the direction of the bishop to consider ward priesthood programs, including temple and family history, missionary, welfare, home teaching, and member activation.

Second is the *ward welfare committee*. It includes the priesthood executive committee plus the Relief Society presidency. This committee meets at least monthly, again under the direction of the bishop, to consider the temporal needs of ward members. Only the bishop may allocate welfare resources, but the committee helps care for the poor by planning and coordinating the use of ward resources, including the time, talents, skills, materials, and compassionate service of ward members. In this and in other committee and council meetings, delicate matters often are discussed, requiring strict confidentiality.

The third is the *ward council*. It includes the priesthood executive committee; the presidents of the Relief Society, Sunday School, Young Women, and Primary; and the activities committee chairman. The bishop may invite others to attend as needed. This council meets at least monthly to correlate planning for all ward programs and activities and to review ward progress toward accomplishing the mission of the Church. The ward council brings a varied group of priesthood and women leaders together to focus on the broad range of issues that affect ward members and the community. The council reviews suggestions from home teachers and visiting teachers.

Using councils to improve reverence

Recently a bishop who was concerned about reverence in his ward expressed his concern to the members of

the ward council and asked for their suggestions. Hesitantly, the Primary president raised her hand.

"Well," she said, "one person consistently does a lot of enthusiastic visiting in the chapel just before and after sacrament meeting. It can be pretty distracting."

The bishop had not noticed anyone being especially noisy in the chapel but he said he would talk to the offending party. He asked the sister who it was.

She took a deep breath. "It's you, Bishop," she said. "I know you're just reaching out to people, and we all appreciate your desire to greet everyone who comes to the meeting. But when others see you moving around the chapel talking to people during the prelude music, they figure it's OK for them to do the same thing."

When others in the ward council nodded in agreement, the bishop thanked her and asked for recommendations. The council soon decided that the bishopric, including the bishop, should be in their places on the stand five minutes before sacrament meeting to set an example of reverence in the chapel. During a follow-up discussion, the council members indicated unanimously that the simple plan had worked and that reverence in sacrament meeting had improved decidedly.

Using councils to improve testimony meetings

Another bishop was concerned about the trend he noticed in ward fast and testimony meetings. Members were bearing few testimonies of Christ and His gospel; instead, they were sermonizing, giving travelogues, sharing personal experiences that were not related to the gospel, and talking about family outings and activities. The bishop understood that those topics were important to the speakers. But they were not testimonies

of Christ and His gospel. He asked the ward council, "How can we teach the importance of using testimony meeting for testifying of Christ and His restored church without offending our members?"

After a little time and some comments by the sisters, the council suggested that the bishop should teach the members what a testimony is and what it is not. In addition the council concluded that the quorums and auxiliaries should discuss the purpose of testimony meeting, and home teachers and visiting teachers should review this subject with individual families during their monthly visits. The bishop now reports, "Our testimony meetings are much better. The witness of Christ and His love for us is expressed by the members, and the spirituality of our ward has improved greatly."

Using councils to help retain converts

One major concern of the General Authorities is the lack of retention in full fellowship of some new converts and those who are less active in the Church. If ward councils are functioning as they should, every new convert will be fellowshipped, will have home teachers or visiting teachers, and will receive an appropriate calling within days after baptism. The less active will receive callings that assure them that they are needed and loved by the ward members.

The Brethren also have expressed "concern regarding Church members' involvement in groups [which are often very expensive] that purport to increase self-awareness, raise self-esteem, and enhance individual agency." Church leaders and members should not become involved in such groups. Instead, "local leaders should counsel those desiring self-improvement to anchor themselves in gospel principles and to adopt wholesome practices that strengthen one's ability to cope with challenges" (*Bulletin*, 1993, number 2:1).

Become a problem-solving team

When stake presidents and bishops allow the priesthood and auxiliary leaders whom the Lord has called to serve with them to become part of a problem-solving team, wonderful things begin to happen. Their participation broadens the base of experience and understanding, leading to better solutions. You bishops energize your ward leaders by giving them a chance to offer suggestions and to be heard. You prepare future leaders by allowing them to participate and learn. You can lift much of the load from your shoulders through this kind of involvement. People who feel ownership of a problem are more willing to help find a solution, greatly improving the possibility of success.

Once the appropriate councils are organized and the brethren and the sisters have full opportunity to contribute, ward and stake leaders can move beyond just maintaining organizations. They can focus their efforts on finding ways to make their world a better place to live. Certainly ward councils can consider such subjects as gang violence, child safety, urban blight, or community cleanup campaigns. Bishops could ask ward councils, "How can we make a difference in our community?" Such broad thinking and participation in community improvement are the right things for Latter-day Saints to do.

How the Apostles counsel together

For the past eight and one-half years I have served as a member of a council of twelve men. We come from different backgrounds, and we bring to the Council of the Twelve Apostles a diverse assortment of experiences in the Church and in the world. In our meetings we do not just sit around and wait for President Howard W. Hunter to tell us what to do. We counsel openly with each other, and we listen to each other with profound respect for the abilities and experiences

our brethren bring to the council. We discuss a wide variety of issues, from Church administration to world events, and we do so frankly and openly. Sometimes we discuss issues for weeks before reaching a decision. We do not always agree during our discussions. But once a decision is made, we are always both united and determined.

Listen and reason in councils

This is the miracle of Church councils: listening to each other and listening to the Spirit! When we support one another in Church councils, we begin to understand how God can take ordinary men and women and make of them extraordinary leaders. The best leaders are not those who work themselves to death trying to do everything single-handedly; the best leaders are those who follow God's plan and *counsel* with their *councils*.

"Come now," said the Lord in an earlier dispensation through the prophet Isaiah, "and let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18). And in this dispensation He repeated that admonition: "Let us reason together, that ye may understand" (D&C 50:10).

Let us remember that the basic council of the Church is the family council. Fathers and mothers should apply diligently the principles I have discussed in their relationships with each other and with their children. As we do so, our homes can become a heaven on earth.

Brothers and sisters, let us work together as never before in our stewardships to find ways to make more effective use of the wondrous power of councils. I ask you to consider all that I said on this subject last October with what I have said today. I testify that we can bring the full force of God's revealed plan for gospel governance into our ministries as we counsel together. May God bless us to stand united as we strengthen the Church and our members, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

Elder Lloyd P. George

Our importance in God's plan

The Psalmist asked the question:

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet" (Psalm 8:3-6).

This clearly puts into perspective the importance of us, his children, in the plan of mortality and eternal life. We also have the word of the Lord to Job when he asked the question of Job:

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

"Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?

"Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;

"When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4-7.)

Brothers and sisters, we were in that council in heaven when this plan was introduced, and we were happy for the privilege and opportunity and blessing of coming to earth to receive bodies, which would permit us to have experiences for good or for evil. My brothers and sisters, how grateful we are to have

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Lloyd P. George, followed by Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy.

had part in this plan of redemption rather than to feel as Paul told the Corinthians, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). Are we willing to give thanks for blessings and knowledge received?

The sin of ingratitude

I believe one of the greatest sins that we, the children of our Heavenly Father, are guilty of is the sin of ingratitude. President Joseph F. Smith said in one of his talks that when a man who has been blessed with additional gifts or greater intellect rises to the acclaim and success of his fellowmen, oftentimes he will attribute his success to his own energies, labors, and mental capabilities. Rather than acknowledge the hand of God in anything connected with his success, he ignores Him altogether and takes the honor to himself (see *Journal of Discourses*, 25:53).

In all the great modern discoveries in science, in the arts, and in all the material advancements of the age, the world says, "We've done it!" The individual says, "I've done it!" and gives no honor or credit to God. President Smith continues by saying, "One of the greatest sins of which the inhabitants of the earth are guilty today, is the sin of ingratitude" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 25:52).

I presume most of us have not thought of that as a serious sin. There is a great tendency for us in our prayers—in our pleadings with the Lord—to ask for additional blessings. Sometimes, I

feel, we need to devote more of our prayers to expressions of gratitude and thanksgiving for blessings already received. Of course, we need the daily blessings of the Lord. But if we sin in the matter of prayer, I think it is in our lack of expressing thanksgiving for daily blessings. God is not pleased with the inhabitants of the earth but is angry with them because they will not acknowledge his hand in all things.

"And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments" (D&C 59:21).

The ten lepers

A classic example of ingratitude as spoken of by the Savior is in Luke, chapter 17:

"And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

"And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

"And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

"And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

"And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

"There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

"And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (vv. 11-19).

Much to be grateful for

I publicly express my gratitude. I am grateful this day to be able to testify to you that I know and understand the plan of our Father, that I can accept it with dedication and with thanksgiving, knowing the plan and the purposes for us being here on earth. I am grateful that the Lord loves us so much that he has allowed his Only Begotten Son to be sacrificed for us. I am also grateful for Joseph Smith—the prophet who is, was, and always will be a prophet of God, ordained and chosen to stand at the head of the dispensation of the fullness of times, with all the keys to unlock the doors into the kingdom of God.

I am grateful that the Lord has allowed me the great privilege and opportunity of being in his service. I have tried to dedicate myself to his holy principles and to his children here on earth.

I am grateful for the things which I have suffered in the flesh, which have been blessings in my life that have taught me patience, long-suffering, faith, and a sensitivity to those who are less fortunate. I am grateful and thankful for the heritage which I have, for those great ancestors who devoted themselves to the work of the Lord, who sacrificed their well-being, yes, and even their lives for their belief in God. How blessed I have been to have worthy parents who taught me in a loving, kind way the principles of salvation by deed and by example.

Grateful I am for a loving, eternal companion who loves the Lord and understands his plan. She is a woman with great patience and understanding. I am grateful for children and grandchildren who support and sustain me. I know well as a father the joy I receive from my children when they express appreciation and love for me. I could not have asked for greater children and grandchildren.

I am grateful that I have had this time to sit in council with those who have responsibility for the kingdom of our Father here on the earth. They are great men, dedicated men, men who have unconditional love for one another and for their God.

How blessed I am for the privilege of associating with the Saints throughout the world! This has brought joy and satisfaction, even a strengthening of my testimony as to how the Lord works.

Receive all things with thankfulness

Truly I have been blessed far beyond that which I merit. And in the coming days, I pray only that I might always be found as Abraham Lincoln said: "Die when I may, I would like it said of me by those who knew me best, that I always plucked a thistle, and planted a rose where I thought a rose would grow." I have learned in my life that trials are blessings in disguise if we accept them

with humility, faith, and fortitude. All that we suffer and endure with patience will build within us a more charitable and tender person, having acquired the education we came on earth to receive.

God help us to be grateful for our blessings, never to be guilty of the sin of ingratitude, and to instill this same gratitude into the lives of our children. The Lord has said, "And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more" (D&C 78:19).

This great principle of gratitude, made a daily part of our lives and our prayers, can lift and bless us as individuals, as members of the Church, and as parents and families.

This testimony, and with a love unfeigned to all the special children of our Heavenly Father, I bear humbly and in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Kenneth Johnson

Dad's coming home!

At the time of my birth, the clouds of war had overshadowed Europe and were sweeping across the English Channel to the British coastline. My father, like thousands of other men of his generation, was required to report for active military service. My elder brother and I were shielded from the turmoil and fear that surrounded us by a mother who compensated for the absence of our father, involving us in a variety of activities. From this I learned that when fathers are absent, mothers can be the recipients of compensatory blessings. I have fond memories of those days and recall her speaking of her beloved companion as she received letters from him, without my fully understanding who he was or what he was doing.

My first recollection of meeting my father occurred when I was five years old. A telegram was delivered to our home. My mother stood with the gold-colored envelope in her hand, making no attempt to open it. I did not realize then as I do now the reason why, and the message it could have contained. Eventually, and with great difficulty, she fumbled with the flap of the envelope. This seemed to take a long time. Even when the telegram was opened and mother read its contents, there was no immediate response. Finally, raising the telegram high above her head, my mother joyfully exclaimed, "Dad's coming home! Dad's coming home!"

My father's parents lived in the adjoining house. Mother, holding the telegram high in the air and with a skipping step, set out in the direction of my grand-

parents' home, shouting, "Dad's coming home! Dad's coming home!" My brother, following close behind, shouted, "Dad's coming home! Dad's coming home!" I brought up the rear, also shouting, "Dad's coming home! Dad's coming home! Who's Dad?"

The next morning when I awoke, there was a man sitting on the edge of my bed holding a leather soccer ball from Italy. He asked if my brother and I would like to play soccer with him. Cautiously I agreed, and we went to an area of grassland near our home, where we played together. This was the beginning of my father's continuing influence in my life. I wanted to spend every moment that I could in his company.

Helping Dad in the shop

We lived, like many others in those war-torn years, in humble circumstances. Our home was modestly furnished. Dad had many skills and used them to beautify the home. He raised the Anderson air-raid shelter located in our garden to ground level and made it his workshop. He spent many hours there repairing shoes and making items of furniture for the home. I would wander into this workshop and watch him. Just to be in his presence was a thrill for me. He invited me to help him by passing a hammer, a screwdriver, or some other tool. I was convinced that my help was necessary and that without me he would not be able to complete his task.

He used a variety of pieces of wood, obtained from different sources and considered by others to be unsuitable for any practical use, and from them created items of great beauty and worth for our family. As he worked he played a game with me, inviting me to determine what he was making. I was seldom able to do so until the components were completed and the object assembled. Then I would declare with great excitement, "It's a bookcase!" or "A table!" and wonder at his ability to create so much from so little.

Service draws us closer to God

As I look back and reflect upon those wonderful memories, I realize that my contribution was not necessary for my father to complete the work he was engaged in. I was the beneficiary, as through these experiences I came to know him and to love him.

How like the association we have with our Heavenly Father, believing at times that the service we engage in is for his benefit, when in reality it is comparable with my handing tools to my father. It is the relationship that develops that is of greater significance than the contribution we make. As expressed by King Benjamin, "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?" (Mosiah 5:13).

Just as I was not able to fully comprehend what my earthly father was building until he completed his work, so it is with our Heavenly Father. When his kingdom is established and the work is complete, we will recognize our home and shout for joy.

Service is essential for a happy life

Selfless service is an essential ingredient for a full and happy life. The enlightening words of President Marion G. Romney enhance our understanding in this regard: "Service is not something we endure on this earth so we can earn the right to live in the celestial kingdom. Service is the very fiber of which an exalted life in the celestial kingdom is made" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, p. 135; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 93).

It is not necessary for us to know the answer to every question or comprehend the reason for every challenge we face to feel secure in the knowledge of our divine Creator. In the words of Nephi, "I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things" (1 Nephi 11:17).

Kevin helps paint

Twenty-six years after the experience with my father, I continued to learn important lessons through a father-and-son relationship. The exterior woodwork of our home was in need of redecoration. I cleaned and prepared the surface and applied an undercoat. In my mind I could visualize the flawless gloss finish that would be the product of my labors. Our five-year-old son, Kevin, watched as I prepared to apply the final gloss covering. He asked if he could help me. I hesitated before responding, considering what effect this would have on the fulfillment of my dream, or alternatively how he would feel if I declined his offer. It was almost as if I heard someone else say, "That would be a great help. Thank you."

After I provided him with an old shirt of mine that covered him completely, almost touching the floor and with sleeves rolled back several times, we went to work on the door that secured the main entrance to our home. He was applying paint to the bottom panel as I worked on the top section. I noticed that because of his age and physical stature, he wasn't able to spread the paint evenly and that beads of paint were resulting. Each time he bent down to recharge his brush, I would hastily smooth out the paint on the bottom panel, returning to my assigned area so that he would not realize what I was doing. After a while I decided that more important than a first-class paint job was the opportunity to work with my son. On reflection I realized how well he was doing. Thereafter, every time I approached the door and saw the distinctive style of decoration, I was reminded of what is really important in our lives.

The learning experiences we shared were not restricted to a temporal plane. As we participated together in ordinances and made covenants, the power of godliness was manifest.

Service strengthens families

My wife, Pamela, had been raised and nurtured with the principles of the restored gospel and was able to help me appreciate the value of family prayer, family home evening, and family council.

We determined early in our marriage that it was our responsibility to teach the gospel to our son and that Church programs would reinforce the teaching in the home. Kevin often accompanied his mother as she visited the sick and the elderly to administer compassionate service.

These experiences have contributed to a close family relationship that has flourished through the years, giving us an insight into the potential that exists in the eternities, as described in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 130, verse 2: "And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy."

Knowing the Father and the Son

We should always remember that regardless of our circumstances, we all have a Father in whom we can trust and to whom we can turn for comfort and counsel. He is our Heavenly Father.

What a thrill it is to hear children singing with conviction, "I am a child of God." We are in truth his offspring, and he is "not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27).

Each day I enjoy an increasing appreciation for the words of the Savior expressed in his great intercessory prayer: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

I know that he lives; I know that he loves us, for we are his children. His son Jesus Christ is our Advocate with the Father and leads his church today through living prophets. I testify that their words will guide us safely home. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just listened to Elder Lloyd P. George, who comes from Kanosh, and Elder Kenneth Johnson, who comes from England.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Put Your Shoulder to

the Wheel." And then Elder Merlin R. Lybbert, who originated in Canada, will address us.

The choir and congregation sang
"Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel."

Elder Merlin R. Lybbert

The special status of children

In a day when one of "the greatest problem[s] in our society is the abandonment of children through the abandonment of parental leadership" (Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983], p. 354), the First Presidency has asked that "we reemphasize the need for all adult members to focus on our children in an ongoing effort to help them learn to follow the teachings of the Savior." Also they have asked each of us to "rededicate ourselves to nourish and bless them temporally and spiritually" (First Presidency Letter, 1 Aug. 1993; see *Ensign*, Jan. 1994, p. 80).

It may be helpful to review some of the doctrines as contained in the scriptures pertaining to the special status of children. These doctrines provide direction for those who are raising children and comfort to those of us who have lost a child in death at an early age.

Parents protect and guide

Heavenly Father intended that each child should have the combined loving protection and guidance of caring parents. The pattern was established by Adam and Eve, our first parents. Joseph, the descendant of David, agreed to become the surrogate father of Jesus, the Son of God, when he accepted Mary as his wife, following a visitation of the

angel Gabriel. In Nazareth, Joseph was regarded as the father of Jesus (see Matthew 13:55).

The Christ child grew and developed in a modest home, where Joseph earned a humble living as a carpenter and where Jesus also learned this craft (see Mark 6:3). There were other members of the family. Mary and Joseph had four other sons and at least two daughters, all of whom were referred to in the community as the brothers and sisters of Jesus (see Matthew 13:55-56; Mark 6:3). The example of Joseph and Mary in providing a suitable home for their large family was such that Luke recorded that Jesus "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40).

Not accountable until age eight

The Lord extends special protection to children and shares jurisdiction with earthly parents, even as we enjoy their presence. They cannot sin until they reach the age of accountability, which the Lord has declared to be eight years (see D&C 18:42; 29:47). In fact, the power to even tempt them to commit sin has been taken from Satan. The prophet Mormon taught that "little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin. . . . Little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a

respector to persons; for how many little children have died without baptism!" (Moroni 8:8, 12).

Because they cannot sin, they have no need of repentance or baptism. Adam's original transgression has no claim, as a result of the atonement of Jesus Christ. Mormon declared the practice of baptizing little children to be a "solemn mockery before God" (v. 9), for repentance and baptism apply to those who are "accountable and capable of committing sin" (v. 10).

Because all children who die before the age of accountability are pure, innocent, and wholly sin-free, they are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven (see D&C 137:10; Mosiah 3:18).

Become as a little child

Understanding the special status of little children before God, because of their pure and innocent nature, brings understanding of the Lord's commandment to "repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in [his] name" (3 Nephi 11:37). The childlike qualities the Lord had reference to are developed by yielding to "the enticings of the Holy Spirit" so as to become "submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father." Truly, such a person "becometh a saint," as spoken by Mosiah (Mosiah 3:19).

A protected time to teach children

Parents in Zion have the special responsibility of teaching and training their children in righteousness. They are to be taught "to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old." Otherwise, the Lord declared, "the sin be upon the heads of the parents" (D&C 68:25).

This teaching is to be done before a child reaches the age of accountability and while innocent and sin-free. This is protected time for parents to teach the principles and ordinances of salvation to their children without interference from Satan. It is a time to dress them in armor in preparation for the battle against sin. When this preparation time is neglected, they are left vulnerable to the enemy. To permit a child to enter into that period of his life when he will be buffeted and tempted by the evil one, without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and an understanding of the basic principles of the gospel, is to set him adrift in a world of wickedness.

Offending these little ones

During these formative, innocent years, a child may learn wrong behavior; but such is not the result of Satan's temptations but comes from the wrong teachings and the bad example of others. In this context, the Savior's harsh judgment of adults who offend children is better understood, wherein he said, "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luke 17:2).

We offend a child by any teaching or example that leads a little one to violate a moral law, causes him to stumble or go astray, excites him to anger, creates resentment; or perhaps even leads him to become displeasing and disagreeable. Certainly, in the context of the Savior's harsh indictment concerning anyone who "offends" a child, one guilty of such conduct is in serious jeopardy.

Every child is entitled to live in a home, as Jesus did, where there is an environment permitting growth in gospel understanding, where each can wax strong in spirit and be filled with wisdom so that the grace of God will be upon him (see Luke 2:40). These precious little ones are as angels among us.

Fulfilling this opportunity of teaching is not dependent upon social status, wealth, or position. In fact, the most effective instruction may well be done at the humblest fireside.

Young children can understand

Some may rationalize their failure to follow this God-given instruction by assuming that children of tender years are not capable of understanding gospel principles. Parents who have followed the practice of teaching their children know otherwise. Family home evening presents a special opportunity to teach the gospel to the family. The parents of a five-year-old were concerned about how they should teach of Nephi's encounter with the wicked Laban. Laban had repeatedly refused to make the precious brass plates containing a religious record available to Nephi and had sought to kill him and his brothers after confiscating their family wealth. When Nephi encountered the drunken Laban, the Spirit directed Nephi to slay him:

"Behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief" (1 Nephi 4:13).

As this young boy, my grandson, knelt beside his bed that evening, his

prayer demonstrated his understanding and personal application of the lesson. He said, "And help me, Heavenly Father, to be obedient like Nephi, even when it's hard."

Demonstration of these principles of truth as taught in the scriptures and applied in the various settings of life is a sure way of developing understanding and obedience in the lives of children. The Primary of the Church also teaches children the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a valuable support the Church gives to parents and their children.

It is my witness that our kind and loving Heavenly Father has made special allowances for little children, consistent with their innocence and the eternal principle of agency. It is also my witness that he gave parents, and all adults, the responsibility of properly teaching and protecting them. Offenders of these little ones face a divine wrath. The Savior's injunction to become as a little child is an invitation to purify our lives that we also may stand blameless before him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just heard from Elder Merlin R. Lybbert of the Seventy.

It will now be our privilege to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

The law of tithing

When the risen Lord appeared to the faithful on this continent, he taught them the commandments the prophet Malachi had already given to other children of Israel. The Lord commanded that they should record these words (see 3 Nephi 24:1).

"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say: Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

"Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open

you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (3 Nephi 24:8-10; see also Malachi 3:8-10).

After the Savior quoted these words, "he expounded them unto the multitude" and said, "These scriptures, which ye had not with you, the Father commanded that I should give unto you; for it was wisdom in him that they should be given unto future generations" (3 Nephi 26:1-2).

Here we see that the law of tithing is not a remote Old Testament practice but a commandment directly from the Savior to the people of our day. The Lord reaffirmed that law in modern revelation, commanding his people to pay "one-tenth of all their interest annually" and declaring that "this shall be a standing law unto them forever" (D&C 119:4).

Blessings promised to tithe payers

No prophet of the Lord in modern times has preached the law of tithing more fervently than Heber J. Grant. As an Apostle and later as President of the Church, he frequently called upon the Saints to pay an honest tithe and made firm promises to those who would do so.

In a general conference in 1912, Elder Heber J. Grant declared:

"I bear witness—and I know that the witness I bear is true—that [to] the men and the women who have been absolutely honest with God, who have paid their tithing, . . . God has given . . . wisdom whereby they have been able to utilize the remaining nine-tenths, and it has been of greater value to them, and they have accomplished more with it than they would if they had not been honest with the Lord" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1912, p. 30).

In 1929, President Heber J. Grant said:

"I appeal to the Latter-day Saints to be honest with the Lord and I promise them that peace, prosperity and financial success will attend those who are

honest with our Heavenly Father. . . . When we set our hearts upon the things of this world and fail to be strictly honest with the Lord we do not grow in the light and power and strength of the gospel as we otherwise would do" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1929, pp. 4-5).

During the Great Depression, President Grant continued to remind the Saints that the payment of tithing would open the windows of heaven for blessings needed by the faithful. In that stressful period, some of our bishops observed that members who paid their tithing were able to support their families more effectively than those who did not. The tithe payers tended to keep their employment, enjoy good health, and be free from the most devastating effects of economic and spiritual depression (see "Tithing Is a Builder of Faith," *Church News*, 9 Dec. 1961, p. 16). Countless tithe-paying Latter-day Saints can testify to similar blessings today.

Mother's example in paying tithing

I am grateful to President Grant and other prophets for teaching the principle of tithing to my parents and to them for teaching it to me. My attitude toward the law of tithing was set in place by the example and words of my mother, illustrated in a conversation I remember from my youth.

During World War II, my widowed mother supported her three young children on a schoolteacher's salary that was meager. When I became conscious that we went without some desirable things because we didn't have enough money, I asked my mother why she paid so much of her salary as tithing. I have never forgotten her explanation: "Dallin, there might be some people who can get along without paying tithing, but we can't. The Lord has chosen to take your father and leave me to raise you children. I cannot do that without the blessings of the Lord, and I obtain those blessings by

paying an honest tithing. When I pay my tithing, I have the Lord's promise that he will bless us, and we must have those blessings if we are to get along."

Joseph F. Smith's mother's example

Years later I read President Joseph F. Smith's memory of a similar testimony and teaching by his widowed mother. In the April 1900 conference, President Smith shared this memory from his childhood:

"My mother was a widow, with a large family to provide for. One spring when we opened our potato pits she had her boys get a load of the best potatoes, and she took them to the tithing office; potatoes were scarce that season. I was a little boy at the time, and drove the team. When we drove up to the steps of the tithing office, ready to unload the potatoes, one of the clerks came out and said to my mother, 'Widow Smith, it's a shame that you should have to pay tithing.' . . . He chided my mother for paying her tithing, called her anything but wise or prudent; and said there were others who were strong and able to work that were supported from the tithing office. My mother turned upon him and said: 'William, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Would you deny me a blessing? If I did not pay my tithing, I should expect the Lord to withhold His blessings from me. I pay my tithing, not only because it is a law of God, but because I expect a blessing by doing it. By keeping this and other laws, I expect to prosper and to be able to provide for my family'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1900, p. 48).

Can't afford not to pay tithing

Some people say, "I can't afford to pay tithing." Those who place their faith in the Lord's promises say, "I can't afford not to pay tithing."

Some time ago I was speaking to a meeting of Church leaders in a country

outside of North America. As I spoke about tithing, I found myself saying something I had not intended to say. I told them the Lord was grieved that only a small fraction of the members in their nations relied on the Lord's promises and paid a full tithing. I warned that the Lord would withhold material and spiritual blessings when his covenant children were not keeping this vital commandment.

I hope those leaders taught that principle to the members of the stakes and districts in their countries. The law of tithing and the promise of blessings to those who live it apply to the people of the Lord in every nation. I hope our members will qualify for the blessings of the Lord by paying a full tithing.

Blessings to nations

Tithing is a commandment with a promise. The words of Malachi, reaffirmed by the Savior, promise those who bring their tithes into the storehouse that the Lord will open "the windows of heaven, and pour [them] out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The promised blessings are temporal and spiritual. The Lord promises to "rebuke the devourer," and he also promises tithe payers that "all nations shall call you blessed, for ye shall be a delightful land" (3 Nephi 24:10-12; see also Malachi 3:10-12).

I believe these are promises to the nations in which we reside. When the people of God withheld their tithes and offerings, Malachi condemned "this whole nation" (Malachi 3:9). Similarly, I believe that when many citizens of a nation are faithful in the payment of tithes, they summon the blessings of heaven upon their entire nation. The Bible teaches that "righteousness exalteth a nation" (Proverbs 14:34) and "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Galatians 5:9; see also Matthew 13:33).

Blessings to individuals

The payment of tithing also brings the individual tithe payer unique spiritual blessings. Tithe paying is evidence that we accept the law of sacrifice. It also prepares us for the law of consecration and the other higher laws of the celestial kingdom. The *Lectures on Faith*, prepared by the early leaders of the restored Church, part the curtain on that subject when they say:

"Let us here observe that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things" (*Lectures on Faith* 6:7).

Tithing not unique to Church members

We should not think that the payment and blessings of tithing are unique to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Tithe paying is commanded in the Bible. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek (see Genesis 14:20). Jacob covenanted to "give the tenth" unto God (Genesis 28:22). After the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt, the prophet Moses commanded that they should give a tenth to the Lord (see Leviticus 27:30-34).

The Savior reaffirmed that teaching when the Pharisees asked him whether it was lawful to pay taxes. The Savior replied with this command: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

A few years ago the *New York Times* carried a feature article on a dozen highly paid professional athletes who were giving a fixed share (usually 10 percent) of their income to their church (see George Vecsey, "As They Look Past Their Riches, Athletes Are Turning to Religion," *New York Times*, 29 Apr. 1991, pp. A1, C7).

None of the featured athletes was LDS. If the names of our tithe-paying LDS professional athletes had been added to the list, it would have been much longer.

There are accounts of good Christian businessmen who promised to give the Lord a share of their profits and then attributed their business success to the fact that the Lord was their partner (see Betty Munson, "His Two Strips of Wheat," *Guideposts*, Dec. 1991, pp. 24-27; William G. Shepherd, "Men Who Tithe," *Improvement Era*, June 1928, pp. 633-45). BYU president Ernest L. Wilkinson, who often spoke of the blessings he had received from paying his tithing, quoted this statement from a non-Mormon businessman:

"We would not lend a neighbor money with which to run his business without interest. Neither would we expect him to lend us money without paying interest. I found I was using God's money and the business talents He had given me without paying Him interest. That's all I've done in tithing—just met my interest obligations!" ("The Principle and Practice of Paying Tithing," *Brigham Young University Bulletin*, 10 Dec. 1957, pp. 10-11).

The proper way to pay tithing

In the Lord's commandment to the people of this day, tithing is "one-tenth of all their interest annually," which is understood to mean income." The First Presidency has said, "No one is justified in making any other statement than this" (First Presidency letter, 19 Mar. 1970, quoted in the *General Handbook of Instructions* [1989], p. 9-1; see also D&C 119).

We pay tithing, as the Savior taught, by bringing the tithes "into the storehouse" (3 Nephi 24:10; Malachi 3:10). We do this by paying our tithing to our bishop or branch president. We do not pay tithing by contributing to our favorite charities. The contributions we

should make to charities come from our own funds, not from the tithes we are commanded to pay to the storehouse of the Lord.

Expenditure of tithes

The Lord has directed by revelation that the expenditure of his tithes will be directed by his servants, the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the Presiding Bishopric (see D&C 120). Those funds are spent to build and maintain temples and houses of worship, to conduct our worldwide missionary work, to translate and publish scriptures, to provide resources to redeem the dead, to fund religious education, and to support other Church purposes selected by the designated servants of the Lord.

Give only the best to the Lord

In earlier times, tithing was paid in kind—a tenth of the herdsman's increase, a tenth of the farmer's produce. I am sorry that our modern cash economy deprives parents of the wonderful teaching opportunities presented by the payment of tithing in kind. In a recent book, *Tongan Saints: Legacy of Faith*, the author quotes a Tongan bishop's memories of one such example:

"Grandpa Vānisi's spirituality inspired an awe in me as a child. I remember following him daily to his plantation. He would always point out to me the very best of his taro, bananas, or yams and say: 'These will be for our tithing.' His greatest care was given to these 'chosen' ones. During the harvest, I was often the one assigned to take our load of tithing to the branch president. I remember sitting on the family horse. Grandfather would lift onto its back a sack of fine taro which I balanced in front of me. Then with a very serious look in his eyes, he said to me, 'Simi, be very careful because this is our tithing.' From my grandfather I learned early in

life that you give only your best to the Lord" (in Eric B. Shumway, trans. and ed., *Tongan Saints: Legacy of Faith* [Laie, Hawaii: The Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1991], pp. 79–80).

I had a similar experience as a young boy on my grandparents' farm. They taught me about tithing with examples of one egg or one bushel of peaches out of ten. Years later I used those same kinds of examples to try to teach the principles of tithing to our own children.

"A very old horse"

Parents are always looking for better ways to teach, and the results of their efforts are sometimes unexpected. Attempting to teach tithing to our young son, I explained the principle of a tenth and how it would apply to the eggs gathered in a chicken farm and the young calves or horses born in a breeding herd. When I finished what I was sure was a clear explanation, I wanted to test whether our seven-year-old had understood. I asked him to imagine that he was a farmer with a harvest of eggs and young animals. I supplied the figures and then asked our little boy what he would give to the bishop as tithing. He thought deeply for a moment and then said, "I would give him a very old horse."

We obviously had some further conversations on the principle of tithing, and I am proud of the way he and his brother and sisters learned and practiced that principle. But I have often thought of that little boy's words as I have observed how some adult Church members relate to the law of tithing. I think we still have some whose attitude and performance consist of giving the bishop something like "a very old horse."

Tithe paying a test of priorities

The payment of tithing is a test of priorities. The Savior taught that reality when he gave this parable:

"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

"And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

"And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

"And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:16-21).

A modern illustration of that principle is suggested in the apocryphal story of two men standing before the casket of a wealthy friend. Asked one, "How much property did he leave?" Replied the other, "He left all of it."

President Lorenzo Snow taught that "the law of tithing is one of the most important ever revealed to man" (quoted in Le Roi C. Snow, "The Lord's Way Out of Bondage," *Improvement Era*, July 1938, p. 442). Faithful adherence to this law opens the windows of heaven for blessings temporal and spiritual. As a lifelong recipient of those blessings, I testify to the goodness of our God and his bounteous blessings to his children.

I pray that each member of this church will qualify for the blessings promised and bestowed on those who bring all their tithes into the storehouse. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just heard Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us, and he will be our concluding speaker.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Elder Hales, we welcome you as a member of the Council of the Twelve. Our friendship goes back, I guess, over three decades. Of course, I've always wondered why when I moved to New York, you moved to Boston. And then when I moved to Boston, you moved back to New York. No longer can you escape! You join the greatest quorum that you can possibly belong to because of the brotherhood and fellowship that are there. Welcome, Elder Hales!

Goodly parents

The Book of Mormon begins with these words: "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father" (1 Nephi 1:1). What a differ-

ent world this would be if the personal journals of each of our Father in Heaven's children could begin with a similar phrase—having goodly parents and being taught by them.

We live in such a special time in history, a time when the Lord's gospel has been restored in its fulness. Our missionary force is increasing in quality and quantity; thus, the gospel is being taught in more languages to more nations and to greater numbers of listening ears than ever before. As wards and stakes are being established in most parts of the world, creative minds have been inspired to develop communication instruments which are capable of bringing the instructions of the prophets to the ears of many, many more people. The good news of the gospel can now spread more rapidly

to bring the hope of everlasting peace to the hearts of mankind.

Family life in crisis

One of the great messages of the gospel is the doctrine of the eternal nature of the family unit. We declare to the world the value and importance of family life, but much of the confusion and difficulty we find existing in the world today is being traced to the deterioration of the family. Home experiences where children are taught and trained by loving parents are diminishing.

Family life where children and parents communicate together in study, play, and work has been replaced by a quick, individual, microwaved dinner and an evening in front of the TV set. In 1991 the National Association of Counties, meeting in Salt Lake City, thought that the lack of home influence had reached such a point of becoming a crisis in our nation and spent time in their meetings discussing their concerns. They identified five basic concepts that could increase every family's chances for success.

First, strengthen relationships through family activities; second, establish reasonable rules and expectations; third, build self-esteem; fourth, set achievable goals; and fifth, periodically evaluate family strengths and needs.

Suddenly the urgent and warning voice of our prophets from the very beginning of time has special relevance. As we have been counseled and encouraged, we must be attentive to our own families and accelerate our missionary effort to bring others to a knowledge of the truth and the importance of the family unit.

Adam and Eve learn parental duties

In the very beginning, the Lord's instructions to Adam and Eve made clear their responsibilities as parents. Their

roles were well defined. After they had received instructions from the Lord, we find them following His counsel and saying this:

"And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.

"And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.

"And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters" (Moses 5:10-12).

Teach and train children

Yes, from the very beginning the responsibility of parents teaching their children was among the instructions the Lord gave to our first earthly parents.

Revelations received as the Church has been restored in this day again admonish parents in their obligation to teach and train their children. In the ninety-third section of the Doctrine and Covenants, we find the Lord chastising some of the brethren for not paying attention to their family responsibilities. The scriptures read:

"But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.

"You have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments; and that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you, and this is the cause of your affliction.

"And now a commandment I give unto you—if you will be delivered you shall set in order your own house, for there are many things that are not right in your house" (D&C 93:40, 42-43).

Importance of family home evening

Years ago the Church admonished all parents to hold weekly family home evenings. Today that admonition has been institutionalized in the homes of Church members. Monday night has been set aside as an evening for families to be together. No Church activities or social appointments should be sponsored on this night. We have been promised great blessings if our families would be faithful in this regard.

President Lee once counseled us:

"Now keep in mind this; that when the full measure of Elijah's mission is understood, that the hearts of the children will be turned to the fathers, and the fathers to the children. It applies just as much on this side of the veil as it does on the other side of the veil. If we neglect our families here in having family home night and we fail in our responsibility here, how would heaven look if we lost some of those through our own neglect? Heaven would not be heaven until we have done everything we can to save those whom the Lord has sent through our lineage" (in *Relief Society Courses of Study, 1977-78* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1977], p. 2).

Then he continued:

"So, the hearts of you fathers and mothers must be turned to your children *right now*, if you have the true spirit of Elijah, and not think that it applies merely to those who are beyond the veil. Let your hearts be turned to your children, and teach your children; but you must do it when they are young enough to be properly schooled. And if you are neglecting your family home evening, you are neglecting the beginning of the mission of Elijah just as certainly as if you were neglecting your research work of genealogy" (p. 2; italics added).

I've often thought of the happy times we had when our family was young and our children were at home. I have

made a mental review of those days and considered the changes I would make in our family organization and administration if we had the opportunity to live that period over again. There are two areas I would determine to improve if that privilege were granted to me to have young children in our home once again.

The first would be to spend more time as husband and wife in a family executive committee meeting learning, communicating, planning, and organizing to better fulfill our roles as parents.

The second wish I would like, if I could have those years over, would be to spend more family time. This includes more consistent, meaningful family home evenings.

Youth contribute to success

The full burden of planning and preparing for family home evenings should not be left to parents alone. The most successful ones I have witnessed are when the youth of the family take an active part.

I call on you great deacons, teachers, and priests, you Beehive girls, Mia Maids, and Laurels to make a major contribution in the success of your family home evenings. In many homes you can be the conscience of the family. After all, you have the most to gain from this experience. If you want to live in a world of peace, security, and opportunity, the family you contribute to can add to the well-being, yes, even of the whole world.

I remember an example of this that occurred over the Christmas holidays one year when we had the grandchildren on an outing with us. In order to have a real togetherness experience, we had arranged for a van to travel together. In the van were Grandpa and Grandma and my son and his three older children. My son's wife had stayed at home with the younger members of the family. I was taking my turn at the wheel, and

my wife was seated next to me acting as our navigator. From the back end of the van, I heard Audrey, the eldest child, counseling with her father. She was saying, "Dad, one of our goals this year was to finish the Book of Mormon in our family study. This is the last day of the year. Why don't we complete it now so that we will be on schedule?"

What a special experience it was to listen to my son and his three children, each taking turns reading aloud the final chapters of Moroni and completing their goal of reading the entire Book of Mormon. Remember, it was a young woman who made this suggestion, not one of the parents.

Challenge to youth

You are a chosen generation—saved for this special time in the history of mankind. You have so much to give to add to the growth and development of the families to which you belong. I challenge you to step forward in your family units with that special, enthusiastic spirit of your youth to make the gospel really live in your homes. Remember the counsel of President Joseph F. Smith when he said:

"I would like my children, and all the children in Zion, to know that there is nothing in this world that is of so much value to them as the knowledge of the gospel as it has been restored to the earth in these latter days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. There is nothing that can compensate for its loss. There is nothing on earth that can compare with the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Let, therefore, all the parents in Zion look after their children, and teach them the principles of the gospel, and strive as far as possible to get them to do their duty—not mechanically, because they are urged to do it, but try to instill into the hearts of the children the spirit of truth and an abiding love for the gospel, that they may not only do their duty because it is pleas-

ing to their parents, but because it is pleasing also to themselves" (*Masterpieces of Latter-day Saint Leaders*, comp. N. B. Lundwall [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1953], p. 78).

Revitalize family home evening

Family home evenings are for everyone, whether it be in a two-parent home, a single-parent home, or in a single-member family unit. Home teachers, we call upon you in your regular visits to encourage and revitalize the holding of family home evenings.

Our present prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, has reminded us again of the necessity of holding family home evenings and the ingredients which constitute a successful one. He has said:

"Designed to strengthen and safeguard the family, the Church's [family] home evening program establishes one night each week that is to be set apart for fathers and mothers to gather their sons and daughters around them in the home. Prayer is offered, hymns and other songs are sung, scriptures are read, family topics are discussed, talent is displayed, principles of the gospel are taught, and often games are played and homemade refreshments served" (in *Conference Report, Philippine Islands Area Conference 1975*, p. 10).

It is our hope that each of you might write down each of those suggestions made by the prophet on what a family home evening should contain.

Then he continues: "Now, here are the blessings promised by a prophet of God for those who will hold weekly [family] home evenings: 'If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influences and temptations which beset them'" (p. 10; see also *Improvement Era*, June 1915, p. 734).

We encourage each of you to follow the counsel of our prophet. In all the family units throughout the Church, evaluate again the progress you are making in holding regular family home evenings. The application of this program will be a shield and a protection to you against the evils of our time and will bring you, individually and collectively, greater and abundant joy now and in the eternities hereafter.

May God bless us that we may revitalize and strengthen this tremendously important program as we counsel together as family members is my prayer in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Perry. Elder Perry has been our concluding speaker for this session.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at

6:00 P.M. mountain standard time. We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. daylight saving time. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session, which follows immediately after it, must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express appreciation to the stirring music of the Mormon Youth Chorus and thank them for the effort they have made to be with us this afternoon. They will sing in conclusion "The Spirit of God like a Fire Is Burning," following which the benediction will be offered by Elder Julio E. Dávila of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "The Spirit of God."

Elder Julio E. Dávila offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 164th Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 2, 1994. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from the University Utah Region. Edgar J. Thompson directed the choir and Richard L. Elliott was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

Brethren, we welcome you this evening to the general priesthood session.

We excuse President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching these proceedings in his apartment.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

We note that Elders David B. Haight, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, and Glenn L. Pace are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; Elders Rex D. Pinegar and Eduardo Ayala are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building; and Elders Alexander B. Morrison and Harold G. Hillam are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those in outlying areas, we announce that at the session this afternoon, Elder Robert D. Hales was released as Presiding Bishop and sustained as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. Elder Cree-L Kofford was sustained as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and Elders Claudio R. Mendes Costa, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, Dieter Uchtdorf, and Lance B. Wickman were sustained as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Merrill J. Bateman was released as a member of the Seventy and sustained as the new Presiding Bishop of the Church, with H. David Burton and Richard C. Edgley as his counselors.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from the University Utah Region, under the direction of Brother Edgar J. Thompson, with Brother Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered," following which Elder Graham W. Doxey of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered."

Elder Graham W. Doxey offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now favor us with "Faith of Our Fathers." Following the choir number, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "Faith of Our Fathers."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My beloved brethren, I am humbled and honored to speak to the priesthood of the Lord's church. This priesthood now numbers more than two million throughout the world who have made a covenant with the Lord to be His servants here upon the earth. We do *His* work. Great is the charge He has given us to "warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ."¹ Ours is a call to labor with all our "heart, might, mind and strength"² "to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion."³ We are "called to serve"⁴ by the Father of us all.

Obedience brings peace and happiness

Tonight I would like to address the Aaronic Priesthood. I pray fervently for the guidance of the Holy Spirit that the Lord's promise might be fulfilled

that "he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together."⁵

My message to you young men is this: by obedience to the laws of the gospel, you can lift yourselves above the quagmire of sin that surrounds us in this world. In addition to helping you to become better servants of the Lord, obedience to these laws will help you to be better in everything you undertake in life, whether it be your activity in the Church, your family, education, business, profession, science, athletics, or any other worthwhile endeavor. You will be a better son, a better brother, and a better friend. You will enjoy your life more; you will be happier and at peace with yourself because you will know that your life is acceptable to your Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

We who serve in this great body of the priesthood do so because each of us has been called and chosen.⁶ God wants us to serve willingly and obediently. We who have made baptismal covenants and have accepted the call to serve in the Lord's kingdom as bearers of the holy priesthood have agreed to conform our will to His. We "should be humble, . . . submissive and . . . diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times."⁷ My young brethren, "learn wisdom in [your] youth; yea, learn in [your] youth to keep the commandments of God."⁸ Nothing is more important to you than obedience to God's commandments.

President Ezra Taft Benson has reiterated that "obedience is the first law of heaven."⁹ This principle applies to all of us.

Horses learned to obey while young

I observed a marvelous display of obedience during a recent visit to a large cattle ranch in Argentina. Early one morning, the gauchos brought forty horses into a corral to select their mounts for the day. Gauchos are like cowboys in the United States. Each gaucho went into the corral and whistled softly like this [whistling]. This established their presence. When the horses heard the soft whistling, they lined up quickly near the fence, facing the gauchos. The horses held their heads high, kept their eyes constantly on their masters, and kept their ears forward in an alert, receptive stance. They gave complete attention and appeared to be anxious to serve. They quickly organized themselves into a line as if for a full military dress inspection or review. The gauchos stepped back out of the way and whistled again. The horses circled quickly to the other side of the corral and lined up facing the gauchos. They looked as if a drill sergeant had called them to attention. Each gaucho chose his mount for the day's work and walked up to the

horse he had selected. The others stayed in line waiting for their assignments.

When I asked how the gauchos taught the horses to be so obedient, I was informed that their training started when the horses were colts. Each one learned from its caring mother and from other mature horses. The gauchos began training the colts when they were young, with kindness, never using the force of a lasso or a whip.

Watching this display of obedience, I thought of you Aaronic Priesthood brethren and how you are taught by your mothers, like the two thousand stripling sons of Helaman,¹⁰ and by caring fathers and priesthood leaders. I thought of you following their good example, disciplining yourselves, and keeping yourselves alert—willing to serve your Lord and Master as He chooses and calls you.

As you grow and mature, you will want and will earn more freedom to live your lives your way and to make your own choices. This you should do. Our hope and prayer is that you will grow up strong and obedient in the faith and that, like the young Jesus, you will increase "in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."¹¹

Honor your priesthood

We urge you to be obedient and faithful to your priesthood duties. God has given you the authority to act in His name during this youthful season of your lives. The Aaronic Priesthood will prepare you for the time when you will be ready to receive the greater authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Prepare well for that great blessing by being faithful now in magnifying your Aaronic Priesthood.

Serve valiantly in any position to which you may be called. Prepare, bless, and pass the emblems of the holy sacrament worthily. Diligently gather fast offerings to assist your bishop in his duty to care for those in need. Tend to your

home teaching duties consistently. Home teaching is an excellent preparation for missionary service. Attend all of your meetings regularly. Study your scriptures and pray daily and pay your tithing.

If you will be obedient bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood, I can promise you that by the time you are an ordained elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood, you will be ready to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as a missionary boldly and persuasively. You will be better prepared for the later privileges and challenges of marriage and fatherhood.

To help missionaries remain faithful and obedient, we give them a little handbook. We ask them to carry it with them and read from it often. We have also provided a handbook for our young men and young women. Its title is *For the Strength of Youth*. We ask you to carry it with you, refer to it frequently, and live according to the counsel it contains. That counsel can protect you from evil and help you to obey even when obedience is difficult.

As you build your lives in obedience to the gospel and strive to achieve your goals, do not become discouraged by temporary setbacks and disappointments. Remember that "it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things."¹² You will grow and learn by overcoming obstacles. The Lord has admonished all of us to "keep [His] commandments and endure to the end."¹³

Overcoming temptation

No doubt, you young men have learned that obedience is not always easy. In fact, it can sometimes seem stifling, uncomfortable, or even impossible. "But with God all things are possible."¹⁴ You can be obedient. You can defeat Satan and overcome temptation. God "will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."¹⁵ The

Lord does not expect anything of you that you cannot do. Remember Nephi's faith when he testified that "the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them."¹⁶

We live in a world filled with evil. Swirling all around us are the whirlwinds of strife and contention, temptation and sin. "The priesthood is a shield against temptation; it motivates and inspires young men to the highest and noblest of deeds; every young man, whether he holds the office of deacon, teacher, or priest, is a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁷

How could we serve Him unless we were free from the evils of mortal life? Some mistakenly think it is impossible to avoid the sins of the world. To escape evil, a few even attempt to isolate themselves from society. The Savior prayed "not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."¹⁸ That, too, is our prayer for you young men.

Willing obedience provides lasting protection against Satan's alluring and tantalizing temptations. Jesus is our perfect example of obedience. Learn to do as He did when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness. Even though He was weakened by fasting, His answer was quick and firm: "Get thee behind me, Satan."¹⁹ Elder Neal A. Maxwell said this of the Savior's example in resisting temptation: "Jesus noticed the tremendous temptations that came to Him, but He did not process and reprocess them. Instead, He rejected them promptly. *If we entertain temptations, soon they begin entertaining us!*"²⁰ When Satan comes calling, cast him out as quickly as possible. Do not let temptation even begin to entertain you.

Be morally clean

I plead with you young brethren of the priesthood to live above the curse of

immorality that is plaguing the earth. Rise above the squalor of pornography, obscenity, and filth. Be virtuous and chaste. Uphold your young sisters in the gospel by respecting their budding womanhood and protecting their virtue. Always conduct yourselves according to the commandments of God when you are with them. You want your girlfriends to remain clean and pure. Just as you surely would protect the chastity of your own sister in your family, likewise protect the virtue of your sisters in God's family.

If you make a mistake, obtain forgiveness through sincere, humble repentance. God does forgive; it is a miracle made possible by the atoning sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. But mistakes that seem to be small to you, if uncorrected, can have enormous consequences.

The First Presidency has stated very clearly that serious sins, especially immorality, could disqualify a young man from serving a mission. Yes, repentance is possible, but the privilege and blessing of serving a full-time mission for the Lord could be lost through transgression. Momentary lapses in an otherwise outstanding life could jeopardize this significant privilege and blessing. Brethren, never let your guard down!

Even though a loving God has provided a pathway to repentance, you simply do not have the time to waste in transgression. Sin wounds the soul; healing slows progress and takes time that could have been used in productive service and progress. The Lord needs you faithful and worthy young men, now and in the future, to combat the forces of Satan that are ravaging the earth.

Byron "Whizzer" White

Let me share an experience from my own youth—an experience that taught me the importance of obedience in doing even small things well. I loved to play football in high school and at the

university. I wanted to be a good athlete. I especially remember one game. Our university team faced the University of Colorado in a contest for the conference championship. We were well coached and really well prepared.

The star of the Colorado team was Byron "Whizzer" White, an all-American who was a tremendous athlete. He was a fast, versatile, and powerful quarterback. His athletic prowess was legendary. His scholastic abilities were equally impressive. He later became a Rhodes scholar and retired recently as an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court.

Our wise coach was Ike Armstrong. His warnings before the game included two simple instructions: one, do not kick off or punt the ball to Whizzer White, and two, never let him get past the line of scrimmage.

We followed his instructions and held Colorado scoreless throughout the first half. Early in the second half, however, Whizzer White kicked a field goal. We answered with a touchdown and kicked the extra point. We were ahead seven to three at the end of the third quarter.

On the second play of the fourth quarter, we punted. The ball sailed deep into the corner of the field, near their end zone. Whizzer White plucked the tumbling ball out of the air at his fifteen-yard line and dropped back to his five-yard line to evade the first of our tacklers. Then with the speed, strength, and agility that had built his reputation, he started upfield and sidestepped every player of our team. I managed only to touch him with my little finger. He ran the entire length of the field for a touchdown—thrilling for Colorado, but disappointing for us.

Later in the fourth quarter, Whizzer dashed around his own right end and beyond the line of scrimmage and ran fifty-seven yards for another touchdown. The game ended with a score seventeen

to seven. Colorado won the game and the conference championship.

Though we lost, I learned the importance of constant obedience to detailed instructions of our leader. Failure to obey our coach's two pregame warnings for just two plays—two brief lapses in an otherwise outstanding effort—cost us the game and the conference championship. That is all it took for us to lose something we had worked so hard to achieve.

Prove yourselves worthy

I testify to you, my brethren, that your Heavenly Father loves you and wants you to receive and enjoy every blessing He has for His children, including the blessings of happiness and peace. We, the leaders of the Lord's church, love you. We pray for you earnestly and constantly. Your leaders in your wards and branches and in your stakes and districts likewise love you and pray for you. Your parents' prayers and love for you are beyond measure. We all want you to succeed in this life and to qualify for the greatest of God's gifts—eternal life in the celestial kingdom. To achieve your goals in this mortal life and prove yourselves worthy of eternal blessings, learn to obey. There is no other way. Obedience brings great strength and power into your lives.

The commandments of the gospel come from a tender, loving Father whose laws are given to make us happy, to protect us, and to help us avoid the inescapable pain and misery that always result when we yield to Satan and give in to temptation. "Wickedness never was happiness."²¹ God is indeed our loving Father. Everything He does is for our good. He knows all things. He knows us much better than we know ourselves, and He knows what is best for us.

May the Lord bless each of you special young men with strength and

courage to obey His will and to prepare diligently for the work and joy that lie ahead, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. D&C 20:59.
2. D&C 4:2.
3. D&C 6:6.
4. *Hymns*, no. 249.
5. D&C 50:22.
6. See John 15:16.
7. Alma 7:23.
8. Alma 37:35.
9. Ezra Taft Benson, address delivered at mission presidents' seminar, 21 June 1988; see also *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), p. 26.
10. See Alma 56:47–48.
11. Luke 2:52.
12. 2 Nephi 2:11.
13. D&C 14:7.
14. Matthew 19:26.
15. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
16. 1 Nephi 3:7.
17. Joseph L. Wirthlin, *A Heritage of Faith*, comp. Richard B. Wirthlin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964), p. 78.
18. John 17:15.
19. Luke 4:8.
20. Neal A. Maxwell, in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, p. 88; or *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 71; italics added.
21. Alma 41:10.

President Monson

I just asked Elder Wirthlin how his little finger was. I suppose it healed, although the pain's still in his heart, isn't it?

We have heard from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Charles Didier, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Richard P. Lindsay of the Seventy.

Elder Charles Didier

Remembering covenants

As members and leaders of this church, we are often depicted as always going to or coming from meetings. This is generally true, but we need to remember why we do so. The Lord, by revelation, reminds us that when we are assembled, as we are here tonight, we are to be instructed and edified that we may know how to act upon his law and commandments (see D&C 43:8–9). How important is it to remember these instructions?

To remember is to keep in mind, to store in memory for later attention or consideration. I remember something so I can use it later for a certain purpose or result. For students like you young men, it means that you memorize facts or information to pass an exam, resulting in good grades and happiness. You may also have learned—perhaps by sad experience—that to forget is to cease to remember, resulting in poor grades and unhappiness. There is always a relationship between remembering, doing, and happiness or forgetting, not doing, and unhappiness.

The process is the same, of course, with spiritual matters. I remember the gospel and the covenants, and I act or participate. I commit and receive the blessings associated with the covenants or commandments. If I forget my faith and my covenants and do not commit and work for my salvation, I fail to receive the promised blessings.

Reflecting on this spiritual teaching pattern in my life, I would like to share with you some of my memories as a convert to the Church. This might help some of you—young or older—learn how to “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9) under any circumstances.

Baptismal covenant

It all started on the day of my baptism. I was twenty-two years old and a college student. I was part of a small group that assembled at a swimming pool in Brussels, Belgium. We didn’t have a chapel at that time. There was no baptismal font, no bishop—just two missionaries and a few branch members to support us. I had no family members with me. It was a first step in the known and the unknown. The known was a sure testimony of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer; of Joseph Smith, a prophet; of the Book of Mormon; and of the Church, the only true one. The unknown was yet to be discovered and experienced. It started to be unveiled by receiving the priesthood after baptism.

Priesthood covenants

According to the procedures followed at that time, a convert almost had to stand at the bar of judgment to receive the priesthood. Three months passed before I was interviewed and ordained a deacon. Then on that Sunday morning I stood in front of the sacrament table to distribute the emblems of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. I still remember the surroundings, which were quite different from the ornate decorations of the church where I had previously worshiped. The dining room of a home had been transformed into a meeting hall for sacrament meetings that were attended by a few members. It was my first experience to magnify my priesthood calling. Nine months later I was ordained a teacher and learned how to teach and to watch over the few members of the branch during their contentions and ups and downs.

These were also interesting days, when attending priesthood meeting

meant sitting in a circle with two missionaries and two other brothers, and reading from one mimeographed sheet of paper that was the lesson. There was no priesthood manual, and only twenty sections of the Doctrine and Covenants had been translated into French. There was no Pearl of Great Price, but most importantly we did have the complete Book of Mormon. We passed this great book from hand to hand and learned about the covenants and teachings of the Lord and his doctrine. Precept upon precept, stone upon stone, I was building my spiritual memory bank and enjoying spiritual happiness.

Another four months passed, and I was ordained a priest. Now I stood on the other side of the sacrament table. The decor was the same, but I felt different. It impressed me that now I was blessing the emblems of the Atonement and memorizing "that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, . . . and always remember him and keep his commandments . . . that they may always have his Spirit to be with them" (D&C 20:77). It was an unforgettable experience, and I still visualize it today when I bless the sacrament as a General Authority.

Two years passed after my baptism, and the day arrived for me to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and to be ordained an elder. The mission president once again laid his hands upon my head. The authority and power to act in the name of the Lord were given. It was received by mutual agreement by an oath and covenant. The oath represented the assurance that the promises of the agreement would be kept by both participants; the covenant, that the conditions of the agreement would be kept.

As I recall that priesthood preparation in the service of the Lord, I can see how remembering my covenants helped me to honor and magnify my priesthood calling, to keep the commandments, and to bring spiritual happiness into my life

in preparation for eternal life. During those trial years, many of my young friends in the Church forgot their covenants and one by one returned to the world. The world always stands between man and God, representing two alternatives but only one true choice.

Covenant of eternal marriage

How can we be strengthened in making the choice to serve the Lord? By simply focusing on the doctrine of Jesus Christ that will ensure the salvation of those who remember it, accept it, and act upon it. How did the process work for me?

As a young man I considered and learned the doctrine of eternal marriage and family. This was of great interest to me and a determining factor in my conversion. I had witnessed the breakup of my parents' marriage; I had seen sorrow caused by death without spiritual knowledge and friends marrying without temple ordinances. I wanted to avoid these tragedies.

What is this doctrine? In the Bible it states that Adam was created, but he was alone. We read, "But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:20). Thus the Lord created woman—not another man—and commanded that they should be united in the sacred bonds of marriage. The first divine, righteous, ordained union between a man and a woman was sealed by these words: "A man . . . shall cleave unto his wife" (Genesis 2:24). This is the established doctrine, and it will never change. It is repeated in modern revelation: "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22).

This union is solemnized by the authority of the everlasting priesthood in a holy and sacred ordinance, the temple sealing. It is also called the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, and its purpose is to bind couples together

on earth and bring them to a fulness of exaltation in the kingdom of God in the hereafter. Then Adam and Eve were also commanded to multiply and replenish the earth. "And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20).

The true concept of marriage and family, the unit composed of a husband, wife, and children sealed together, was instituted at the beginning by God to create eternal families. That foundation principle became my vision and my goal and also reality as my companion and I were sealed in the temple in Zollikofen, Switzerland. As a husband and father and later as a grandfather, I was and still am responsible for the development, temporal support, protection, and salvation of my family.

The Church provides the framework

Another determining factor in my conversion was the Church as a divine institution led by the authority of the priesthood. It provided the framework that I needed for support as a member of that covenant group. I could not save my family by myself.

Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote: "The Church, the community of persons with the same intelligent faith and desire and practice, is the organized agency through which God deals with His children and presents His will. Moreover, the authority to act for God must be vested on earth in some one organization and not independently in every man. The Church through the Priesthood holds this authority for the use of man" (*Priesthood and Church Government* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 180).

The Church provides a unique support for individuals and families to do things that they cannot do by themselves, such as receiving the essential ordinances of salvation. It brings temporal relief in times of hardship. It is also a laboratory outside of the home where

we can serve, learn, and practice charity, the pure love of Christ.

The patriarchal order

I also found in this church that the priesthood has a patriarchal order and that God is a God of order. He is at the head, and following this pattern the priesthood is conferred upon worthy men so they can preside in their homes and families. The husband and father, a patriarch, is to preside in righteousness and exercise the power of his priesthood to bless his wife and family. The husband and wife serve as partners in governing their family, and both act in joint leadership and depend on each other. They are united in the vision of their eternal salvation, one holding the priesthood, the other honoring and enjoying the blessings of it. One is not superior or inferior to the other. Each one carries his or her respective responsibilities and acts in his or her respective role.

Much more could be said about the priesthood and its uniqueness, the divine commission given to man through which he acts in the plan of salvation. In essence, therein is the true doctrine of the Father, the irreversible correct principles to govern ourselves, and the know-how to act upon the law and commandments that we were given.

Remember, act, and commit

In this age of increased individualism and selfishness, opinions now matter more than facts or doctrine; attitudes glorify personal choice above other values and principles; and language is typified by "I don't need anyone to tell me how to be saved; I don't need prophets, seers, or revelators to tell me what God expects of me; I don't need to attend church meetings, to hear talks, or to be challenged."

Today the concept of priesthood and Church authority is on trial by the world

and even by some members who think that the Latin expression *vox populi, vox Dei* can be literally interpreted in the Church as "the voice of the people is the voice of God." The commercial slogan "Have it your way" certainly does not apply in God's plan for the salvation of his children when we read that the very cause of apostasy is when "every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god" (D&C 1:16). How do you overcome the temptation to have it your own way, to satisfy your own appetites, and to follow the world's trends?

One of my simple answers tonight is to constantly remember your covenants,

to act on them, and to commit to them. This sequence, as repeatedly stated in the scriptures, is a classic, spiritual teaching pattern to prepare us for eternal life. It is centered upon Christ and his doctrine and teachings. I will remember them forever.

I testify that Jesus lives, that this is the only true church, that the priesthood of the Son of God is vested herein, and that prophets, seers, and revelators who preside over this church are appointed to preserve the pure doctrine of Jesus Christ and the authority of his priesthood for the salvation of his people. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Richard P. Lindsay

Elder Wirthlin, I was at that football game and spent ten cents to watch that great run. But I forgive you for not tackling Whizzer White.

Gratitude for Aaronic Priesthood leaders

Along with Elder Wirthlin, I should like to speak tonight to the great army of young Aaronic Priesthood bearers and especially to those who are called in these challenging times by divine revelation to be their priesthood leaders. I have had a lifelong feeling of deep gratitude to the Aaronic Priesthood leaders who blessed my early life in ways I will never be able to repay. These good men helped fill the void in my life after my father, who had served nearly all his married life as our ward's bishop, was taken by a sudden illness when I was five years old.

Some years later in 1940 as a ward deacons quorum president, I received a letter from the Presiding Bishopric of the Church, signed by LeGrand Richards, Marvin O. Ashton, and Joseph L. Wirthlin. This letter said in part, "The Presid-

ing Bishopric of the Church extends to the Presidency of the Taylorsville Ward deacons quorum congratulations and best wishes on achieving more than 90% attendance in priesthood and sacrament meeting for the year 1939." Can you imagine, brethren, the impact of this letter on the Aaronic Priesthood bearers of our rural ward and especially the three thirteen-year-old deacons who composed the quorum presidency? From that moment on, these men of the Presiding Bishopric became my instant heroes.

Faithful deacons quorum adviser

In more mature reflection on that event, I realize that this letter was largely the result of a faithful, conscientious ward bishopric whose second counselor, assigned to the deacons quorum, frequently sat in council with us in our weekly quorum presidency planning meeting. He was *always* present for at least a portion of our weekly quorum meeting. Our quorum adviser was the kind of humble leader I envision the Savior trying to help Peter become as

He admonished the soon-to-be prophet-leader of the Church, "Peter, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (see Luke 22:32).

As we sat each Sunday morning in the dimly lit basement room of a nineteenth-century-built chapel, this great deacons quorum adviser poured out his heart to his young flock of eager youth. With pure love and plain words he told us of the folly of using harmful substances revealed by the Lord in the Word of Wisdom. He emphasized the need for us to be clean in body and mind in our personal lives and to be worthy to serve the Lord in the mission field. I remember that at appropriate times, with tears in his eyes, he would bear his humble testimony to the members of the deacons quorum of the divinity of the Savior and the prophetic mission of Joseph Smith.

He taught us faithfully that we were our brothers' keepers and that the purpose of the quorum was to bless each member's life. He emphasized that when we passed the sacrament or collected fast offerings or cut wood for widows living in the ward, we were doing just what the Lord would have us do. When one member of our quorum from a less-active family suffered a prolonged illness and could not attend priesthood meetings, we would go to his home, and he would there receive the weekly priesthood lesson and the fellowship of quorum members. When another less-active member, whose single parent was not a member of the Church, failed to attend, priesthood sessions were held in his home as well. Both of these young men in more recent years have blessed countless Church members as they have been called to positions of major responsibility.

Many years later I stood at the hospital bedside of this dear quorum adviser as he was about to exchange this life for eternity. Despite considerable

personal suffering, he wanted to use that brief time to have me review with him the current circumstances of each of those deacons who had belonged to that favored quorum more than thirty years earlier.

His life literally fulfilled the instruction of the Savior to Peter on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias in his final admonition to the Apostles: "Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

The battle for the Lord's sheep

The battle for the souls of our Heavenly Father's precious sheep and lambs is raging in every corner of the world.

An increasingly permissive culture, so heavily influenced by the media, especially television, has caused us all, and especially our youth, to be subjected to a moral wasteland of values. Television in America in most instances has almost single-handedly removed vulgarity from modern culture by making it the "norm." The result is a mass culture driven by profiteers who exploit the hunger for vulgarity, pornography, and even barbarism. Such influences cannot help but have a demoralizing effect on the religious faith and belief of our great young people.

Reach out to young men

Such is the condition envisioned by Bible and Book of Mormon prophets. And such is the world in which the faithful bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood in our time must live and emerge valiant and victorious. Against this worldly backdrop, leaders of Aaronic Priesthood must reach out, with love, to help each young man to—

- Become truly converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ and live by its teachings;
- Magnify his priesthood callings;
- Give meaningful service;

- Prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood;
- Commit to, worthily prepare for, and serve an honorable mission;
- Live worthy to receive temple covenants and prepare to become a worthy husband and father.

Brethren, make sure that the love and fellowship of the priesthood reaches out to each young man in your quorum and that each one is included and friendshipped.

The lesson of the lambs

Since recently returning from a three-year Church assignment in Africa and becoming reacquainted with our twenty-three grandchildren, Sister Lindsay and I have often been requested on such visits to tell these grandchildren a bedtime story that is, first, true; second, exciting; and third, one they have never heard before. All you grandpas here tonight can understand the challenge which such a request represents. One such true story did come to my mind, however, as we visited recently in the home of a son and his wife who live in a midwestern city with their five children, including three bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood—a priest, a teacher, and a deacon. This story concerned their own father when he was a six-year-old boy.

I grew up in rural Salt Lake County when it was an economic necessity to care for a variety of barnyard animals. My favorite animals were sheep—prompted perhaps by the fact that sheep do not require being milked twice a day, seven days a week.

I wanted our own sons to have the blessing of being shepherds to such farm animals. Our older sons were each provided with a ewe to teach them the responsibility of caring for these sheep and the lambs that would hopefully follow.

Our second son, newly turned six years of age, called me excitedly at my office one cold March morning on the

phone and said, “Daddy, guess what? Esther [Esther was his mother ewe]—Esther has just had two baby lambs. Please come home and help me take care of them.” I instructed Gordon to watch the lambs carefully and make sure they received the mother’s milk and they would be fine. I was interrupted by a second phone call later in the morning with the same little voice on the other end saying, “Daddy, these lambs aren’t doing very well. They haven’t been able to get milk from the mother, and they are very cold. Please come home.”

My response likely reflected some of the distress I felt by being distracted from my busy work schedule. I responded, “Gordon, the lambs will be all right. You just watch them, and when Daddy comes home we will make sure they get mother’s milk and everything will be fine.” Again, later in the afternoon I received a third, more urgent call. Now the voice on the other end was pleading. “Daddy, you’ve got to come home now. Those lambs are lying down, and one of them looks very cold.” Despite work pressures, I now felt some real concern and tried to reassure the six-year-old owner of the mother sheep by saying, “Gordon, bring the lambs into the house. Rub them with a gunnysack to make them warm. When Daddy comes home in a little while, we will milk the mother, feed the lambs, and they will be fine.”

Two hours later I drove into the driveway of our home and was met by a boy with tear-stained eyes, carrying a dead lamb in his arms. His grief was overwhelming. Now I tried to make amends by quickly milking the mother sheep and trying to force the milk from a bottle down the throat of the now weak, surviving lamb. At this point, Gordon walked out of the room and came back with a hopeful look in his eyes. He said, “Daddy, I’ve prayed that

we will be able to save this lamb, and I feel it will be all right.”

The sad note to this story, brethren, is that within a few minutes the second lamb was dead. Then with a look that I will remember forever, this little six-year-old boy who had lost both of his lambs looked up into his father’s face and with tears running down his cheeks said, “Daddy, if you had come home when I first called you, we could have saved them both.”

Be with the lambs when needed

Dear brethren of the priesthood, those who are entrusted as keepers of the Lord’s precious flock—we must be there with the lambs when we are needed. We must teach with love, principles of faith, and goodness and be righteous examples to the lambs of our Heavenly Father. Each quorum member must be prepared for his future role as a bearer of the holy Melchizedek Priesthood in

a world plagued with sin and desperate for decisive moral leadership.

I leave my witness that this is God’s work. It is the most important work in all the world in which we can be engaged. That we will be instruments in His hands in saving the precious lambs for which He gave His life, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We’ve just listened to Elders Charles Didier and Richard P. Lindsay of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Oh Say, What Is Truth?” We shall then hear from Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy, who is currently presiding as president of the New York Rochester Mission.

The choir and congregation sang “Oh Say, What Is Truth?”

Elder Marlin K. Jensen

Brethren, I am grateful to be a part of this vast assembly of priesthood bearers. I am also especially mindful of a wonderful little band of missionaries with which my wife and I are currently blessed to labor in the New York Rochester Mission. Speaking perhaps for all mission presidents and the missionaries’ parents, I wish to say during my temporary absence from them, “Please work hard, drive carefully, and be good!”

The power of a good life

All of us who hold the priesthood of God are involved in a glorious common cause—helping our Father in Heaven bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man (see Moses 1:39). This task, in its simplest form, involves qualifying ourselves for the blessings of the Savior’s

atonement and helping others to do the same.

Over the years as I have struggled with my own weaknesses and have tried in my way to help others overcome theirs, I have received assistance and motivation from a variety of sources. Personal prayer, my knowledge of an interested, loving Father in Heaven and His plan of salvation, the scriptures, the temple, and the promptings of the Holy Ghost have been especially helpful. However, even more immediate than these in some ways have been the influence and inspiration provided by the lives of noble people. I am ever impressed and deeply moved by the power of even one good life.

From among many exemplary lives in our rich history as a people, I wish to share examples from just two. The first

is from the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Joseph Smith silences prison guards

During a bitter winter of imprisonment in Richmond, Missouri, Joseph and some fifty other brethren were subjected to great hardship and exposure. One of their greatest trials was to endure the blasphemies and filthy language of their guards as they boasted of their unspeakable cruelty to the Saints.

Of one particularly tedious night, Elder Parley P. Pratt wrote:

"I had listened till I became so disgusted, shocked, horrified, and so filled with the spirit of indignant justice that I could scarcely refrain from rising upon my feet and rebuking the guards; but had said nothing to Joseph, or any one else, although I lay next to him and knew he was awake. On a sudden he arose to his feet, and spoke in a voice of thunder, or as the roaring lion, uttering, as near as I can recollect, the following words:

"SILENCE, ye fiends of the infernal pit. In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and hear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die THIS INSTANT!"

"He ceased to speak. He stood erect in terrible majesty. Chained, and without a weapon; calm, unruffled and dignified as an angel, he looked upon the quailing guards, whose weapons were lowered or dropped to the ground; whose knees smote together, and who, shrinking into a corner, or crouching at his feet, begged his pardon, and remained quiet till a change of guards."

Elder Pratt continues:

"I have seen the ministers of justice, clothed in magisterial robes, and criminals arraigned before them, while life was suspended on a breath, in the Courts of England; I have witnessed a Congress in solemn session to give laws

to nations; I have tried to conceive of kings, of royal courts, of thrones and crowns; and of emperors assembled to decide the fate of kingdoms; but dignity and majesty have I seen but *once*, as it stood in chains, at midnight, in a dungeon in an obscure village of Missouri" (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975], pp. 210–11).

Does not this image of the Prophet Joseph courageously rebuking the forces of evil move us to do likewise?

Willard Bean, the "fighting parson"

The second example is from the life of Willard Bean, a remarkable man who became known as the "fighting parson." In the spring of 1915, Willard and his new bride, Rebecca, were called by President Joseph F. Smith to serve a mission for "five years or longer" in Palmyra, New York (Vicki Bean Topliff, *Willard Bean: "The Fighting Parson"* [Huntington Beach, Calif.: n.p., 1989], p. 87; for the account of their life in Palmyra, see pages 86–131). Their task was to occupy the recently acquired Joseph Smith home and farm and to reestablish the Church in the hostile environment which still existed at the time in Palmyra.

The Beans were rebuffed on every front as they settled into the Smith home. The townspeople would not speak to them or wait on them in their stores. Passersby would pause in front of the home and shout obscenities. Their children were assigned to sit in the back corners of the schoolroom and were shunned by the other children in class.

Willard, who was an accomplished athlete and had been a prize-winning boxer, decided to improve public relations by putting on a boxing exhibition in Palmyra. A ring was set up in an old opera house, and the "fighting parson" challenged all comers to a boxing match.

When the night of the exhibition arrived, the toughest men in Palmyra sat

in the first few rows. One by one they entered the ring, only to be carried out again in a matter of seconds! This continued until the seventh challenger was similarly disposed.

Brother Bean's fighting abilities were more spontaneously employed on another occasion as he walked along the unfriendly streets of Palmyra. A man watering his front lawn one afternoon suddenly turned the hose on Willard and taunted, "I understand you people believe in baptism by immersion." The spry, athletic Willard reportedly vaulted over the fence separating them and replied, "Yes, and we also believe in the laying on of hands" (*Willard Bean: "The Fighting Parson,"* p. 14).

Although Brother Bean's methods were a little unorthodox and definitely not compatible with the current approved missionary program of the Church, they were nonetheless effective. The people of Palmyra began begrudgingly to yield and to accept the Beans as the good people they were. In time, they were invited to participate in local churches and to join the civic organizations of the day. They established a branch of the Church and helped acquire the Hill Cumorah and the Martin Harris and Peter Whitmer farms. The "five years or longer" mission to which the prophet had called them stretched to nearly twenty-five years before it concluded. During that time, the attitude of the people of Palmyra had changed from hostility toward the Beans to toleration, then admiration, and finally to love. The power of good lives is truly great.

One piece of horehound candy

I am personally greatly motivated by the modest written and oral traditions of my own fathers which have been handed down.

For instance, as a young boy, my great-grandfather arose one Christmas morning with great anticipation and

came down from the loft where he slept to inspect the stocking he had hung by the fireplace the previous night. To his dismay he found what was to constitute his entire Christmas that year—one piece of horehound candy! He was immediately faced with a weighty decision: Should he eat the candy in one glorious burst of flavor, or should he make it last? The scarcity of such delicacies apparently convinced him to make it last. He carefully licked the solitary piece of candy a few times and then wrapped it in tissue paper and hid it under his mattress. Each Sunday thereafter, following dinner, he retreated to his bed, retrieved his treasure, and enjoyed a few pleasurable licks. In that way he nursed the piece of candy through an entire year's enjoyment.

This is obviously not an account of deeds of heroic proportions. And yet, in these times of overindulgence and excess, it is somehow very inspiring and strengthening to me to know that a little of my great-grandfather's frugal blood flows in my own veins.

Our need for good influences

The Lord is surely aware of our need to feel the influence of good people. That may be one reason why He has established a pattern of companionships as we work together through the priesthood to serve Him and His children. That also may be why He has counseled that "if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also" (D&C 84:106).

I have personally experienced the benefit of such a priesthood apprenticeship. In my Aaronic Priesthood years, a man who this evening is a silver-haired stake patriarch became my "senior" home teaching companion. Under his wise tutelage, and in spite of considerable resistance on my part, I learned

for the first time how to “warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ” (D&C 20:59). When the time later came at age nineteen for a full-time mission, I did not really need a missionary preparation course; I had had one! I thank God for the love and influence of such mentors.

“Just send your father!”

Before concluding, I hope you will pardon a personal reference to my own father and the power of his good life in mine. For a half century now I have benefited from his wisdom, his generosity, and his goodness. I am not sure I realized the full extent of his influence until recently as I prepared to return home following the final session of a stake conference to which I had been assigned. An elderly brother came up from the congregation to meet me. He thanked me for coming, and then, in obvious reference to the many times I must have quoted my father and referred to his teachings during the conference sessions, he said, “Brother Jensen, if you are ever assigned again to our stake, why don’t you just send your father!” My hope is that in some small way I will have a similar influence for lasting good in the lives of our own children.

A lasting influence for good

The list of valiant people whose lives touch our own includes family members, missionary companions, friends, Church leaders, teachers, and associates from various walks of life. Some we know intimately and others only by reputation. Less obvious to most of us is the influence we may be having in the lives of others. This interaction, to me, is one of the reasons why a community of believing Latter-day Saints is a foundational element of the gospel. It also explains why we build meetinghouses rather than hermitages.

It is through the lives of good people that we at least in part become better acquainted with the greatest of all lives. When we see Christ’s image in the countenances of others, it helps us live to receive it in our own.

I thank God for the blessing of good people in all of our lives and pray that we may all in some small way serve that same purpose in the lives of others, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

It will now be my opportunity to express a few thoughts on this occasion.

President Thomas S. Monson

The priesthood—a sacred trust

What a solemn thought, to contemplate the vast priesthood audience assembled here in the Tabernacle on Temple Square and gathered in hundreds of buildings throughout the world! I sincerely pray for the Spirit of the Lord to guide my remarks this evening.

The presence of those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood brings to mind my own experiences as I graduated from

Primary, having memorized the Articles of Faith, and then received the Aaronic Priesthood and the office and calling of a deacon. To pass the sacrament was a privilege, and to gather fast offerings a sacred trust. I was set apart as the secretary of the deacons quorum and, at that moment, felt that boyhood had passed and young manhood had begun.

Can you young men realize the shock I felt, while attending an officers’ meeting of our ward conference, when a

member of the stake presidency, after calling upon the priesthood and auxiliary leaders to speak, without warning read my name and office, inviting me to give an account of my stewardship and to express my feelings regarding my calling as secretary of the deacons quorum and thus a ward officer. I don't recall what I said, but a sense of responsibility engulfed me, never to depart thereafter.

I sincerely hope that each deacon, teacher, and priest is aware of the significance of his priesthood ordination and the privilege which is his to fulfill a vital role in the life of every member through his participation in administration and passing of the sacrament each Sunday.

Priesthood opening exercises

At the time I held the Aaronic Priesthood, it seemed we always sang the same hymns during the opening exercises of priesthood meeting. They were "Come, All Ye Sons of God," "Come, All Ye Sons of Zion," "How Firm a Foundation," "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling," and a few others. Our voices were not the best, nor was volume adequate, but we learned the words and remembered the message of each.

I smile when I reflect on an account I heard concerning Brother Thales Smith and his service in a bishopric with Bishop Israel Heaton. Sister Heaton called Brother Smith one Sunday morning and mentioned that her husband was ill and unable to attend priesthood meeting. Brother Smith reported this to the brethren assembled that morning and asked the brother who was to offer the invocation to remember Bishop Israel Heaton in the prayer. Then he announced that the opening hymn would be "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling." I suppose the smiles outnumbered any frowns. By the way, Bishop Heaton recovered.

The opening exercises of priesthood meeting may be brief but should be held

in each ward without fail. It brings to the hearts and souls of all assembled a spirit of unity, the brotherhood of priesthood, and a beautiful reminder of our sacred duties.

Priesthood is service

All who hold the priesthood have opportunities for service to our Heavenly Father and to His children here on earth. It is contrary to the spirit of service to live selfishly within ourselves and disregard the needs of others. The Lord will guide us and make us equal to the challenges before us. Remember His promise and counsel:

"The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church—

"To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant."¹

To merit this blessing, it is necessary for each of us to recall who is the Giver of every gift and the Provider of every blessing. "The worth of souls is great in the sight of God"² is not an idle phrase but a heaven-sent declaration for our enlightenment and guidance. We must ever remember who we are and what God expects us to become. This pearl of philosophy is hidden away in the delightful musical *Fiddler on the Roof* as the peasant father Teyve counsels his growing daughters.

Other contemporary plays carry thoughts worthy of our consideration as we prepare for service. From the production *Camelot* comes the observation, "Violence is not strength, and compassion is not weakness." From *Shenandoah*, "If we don't try, we don't do; and if we don't do, then why are we here?"

Eliza Doolittle, the pupil of Professor Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady*, observes of Colonel Pickering her philosophy: "The difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves but how she is treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins because he always treats me as a flower girl and always will. But I know that I shall always be a lady to Colonel Pickering because he always treats me as a lady and always will." Again from *Camelot*, King Arthur pleaded with Guinevere, "We must not let our passions destroy our dreams."

The list continues. In reality, each magnificent observation is but a paraphrase of the teachings of our Lord, Jesus Christ. He is our exemplar and our guide. It is in His footsteps we must walk to be successful in our priesthood callings.

Guidelines to be a successful bishop

May I share with you tonight words of wisdom from fellow servants who labored in the ranks but who have now gone to their eternal reward.

First, from a wise stake president to a young bishop: "The work is all-consuming, but ever realize three guidelines to be a successful bishop: feed the poor, have no favorites, and tolerate no iniquity." Commenting on this last guideline, President Spencer W. Kimball declared, "When dealing with transgression, apply a bandage large enough to cover the wound—no larger, no smaller."³

The East Cache Stake's four-year plan

Second, prior to the creation of the Toronto Ontario Stake in 1960, Elder ElRay L. Christiansen, then an Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, recounted for the benefit of priesthood leaders a lesson from his own life when he was called to preside over the East Cache

Stake in Logan, Utah. He mentioned that he and his counselors met to discuss what the stake members most needed and which principles of the gospel the stake presidency should stress. Their opinions varied from sacrament meeting attendance to observance of the Sabbath day, with a lot of territory in between. At length they agreed that the principle most needed was spirituality. They appreciated the truth found in the observation: *When one deals in generalities, he will rarely have a success; but when he deals in specifics, he will rarely have a failure.*

The four-year plan of President Christiansen and his counselors was refined in a splendid fashion. *Year one:* We shall increase the spirituality of the membership of the East Cache Stake by every family having family prayer. *Year two:* We shall increase the spirituality of the membership of the East Cache Stake by every member attending sacrament meeting weekly. *Year three:* We shall increase the spirituality of the membership of the East Cache Stake by each member paying an honest tithing. *Year four:* We shall increase the spirituality of the membership of the East Cache Stake by each member honoring the Sabbath day and keeping it holy. Each was the theme for the entire year; emphasis was given constantly.

After the four-year program was concluded, all four of the specific objectives had been attained, but of even greater significance, the spirituality of the membership of the East Cache Stake had shown marked improvement.

Spirituality comes through service

Spirituality is not bestowed simply by wishing; rather, it comes quietly and imperceptibly by serving. The Lord counseled, "Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work."⁴ Many years ago, while attending a district conference in Ottawa, Canada, I called two men from the small Cornwall

Branch to serve in responsible positions in the Lord's service. I jotted down their heartfelt response and share with you tonight the words of yesteryear. From John Brady: "I have covenanted; I will faithfully serve." From Walter Danic: "The gospel is the most important thing in my life; I will serve."

President John Taylor provided rather direct counsel to those of us who hold the priesthood: "If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty."³

Somehow I feel that if we will always remember who it is we serve, and on whose errand we are, we will draw closer to the source of the inspiration we seek, even our Master and Savior.

President Harold B. Lee's influence

President Harold B. Lee had a marked influence on Sister Monson and me and our three children. On rather brief occasions he commented to each of our children in a tone which reflected deep spirituality, genuine interest, and inspired counsel.

Our youngest son, Clark, was about to turn twelve when we chanced to meet Brother Lee in the parking lot of the Church Office Building. He asked Clark how old he was. Clark answered, "Soon to be twelve."

Came the question: "What happens to you when you turn twelve?"

The response: "I'll receive the Aaronic Priesthood and be ordained a deacon."

With a warm smile and the clasp of his hand, Brother Lee said, "Bless you, my boy."

Our daughter, Ann, as a young teenager was with her mother and me when we encountered Brother Lee, and proper introductions were made. Brother Lee took our daughter's hand in his and, with a lovely smile, said to her, "You, my dear one, are beautiful

inside as well as outside. What a choice young lady you are."

In a more solemn setting, Brother Lee met me one evening on the steps of the LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City. By appointment we were to give a blessing to my eldest son, Tom, who was then in his later teens. Surgery awaited which could be of a most serious nature. Brother Lee took my hand before we ascended the stairs and, looking me straight in the eye, said, "Tom, there is no place I would rather be at this moment than by your side to participate with you in providing a sacred priesthood blessing to your son."

We then went to the room, where he said to Tom, "We are about to give you a blessing, even to provide a priesthood ordinance. We approach this privilege in humility, for we remember the counsel of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who said that when those who hold the priesthood place their hands on the head of a person in this sacred ordinance, it is as though the hands of the Lord are placed thereon." The blessing was given; the surgery turned out to be minor. But lessons were learned, spirituality of a great leader was observed, and a model to follow was provided.

Activation: a priesthood duty

Brethren, there are tens of thousands of priesthood holders scattered among you who, through indifference, hurt feelings, shyness, or weakness, cannot bless to the fullest extent their wives and children—without considering the lives of others they could lift and bless. Ours is the solemn duty to bring about a change, to take such an individual by the hand and help him arise and be well spiritually. As we do so, sweet wives will call our names blessed, and grateful children will marvel at the change in Daddy as lives are altered and souls are saved.

When I visited stake conferences as a member of the Twelve, I always took

note of those stakes which had excelled in bringing to activity those brethren whose talents and potential leadership had lain dormant. Inevitably I would ask, "How were you able to achieve success? What did you do and how did you do it?" One such stake was the North Carbon Stake when President Cecil Broadbent presided. Eighty-seven men had been reactivated and, with their wives and children, went to the Manti Temple in the space of one year. President Broadbent, upon hearing my questions, turned to his counselor, President Stanley Judd, a large and good-natured coal miner, and said, "This is President Judd's responsibility in the stake presidency. He will answer."

As I restated my questions to President Judd, I concluded with the plea, "Will you tell me how you did it?"

With a smile, he replied, "No." I was stunned! Then he said, "If I tell you how we did it, then you will tell others, and they will surpass our record." I was still stunned. Then, with a twinkle in his eye, this wonderful man added, "However, Brother Monson, if you will give me two tickets to general conference, I'll tell you how we did it."

The tickets were provided; the success pattern was revealed. However, President Judd felt the contract was open-ended and asked for and received from me two tickets for each conference until he was eventually ordained a patriarch.

The formula was the same, generally speaking, in each successful stake with regard to this phase of the work. It consisted of four ingredients: one, put forth your efforts at the ward level; two, involve the ward bishop; three, provide inspired teaching; and four, do not attempt to concentrate on all the brethren at once; rather, work with a few husbands and their wives at a given time and then have them help you as you work with others.

High-powered sales techniques are not the answer in priesthood leadership; rather, devotion to duty, continuous effort, abundant love, and personal spirituality combine to touch the heart, prompt the change, and bring to the table of the Lord His hungry children who have wandered in the wilderness of the world but who now have returned "home."

Releasing President Winters

Long years ago I reorganized the Star Valley Wyoming Stake at the time the legendary leader President E. Francis Winters was released. He had served faithfully and with distinction for many years.

The Sabbath day dawned; the members came from far and wide and crowded into the Afton, Wyoming, chapel. Every available space was taken. As the reorganization of the stake presidency was concluded, I did something I had not done before. I felt impressed to conduct a modest exercise, and I asked publicly, "Would all of you who have been given a name or been baptized or confirmed by Francis Winters please stand and remain standing." Many stood. Then I continued, "Now will all of you who have been ordained or set apart by Francis Winters please stand and remain standing." Another large number swelled the ranks of those standing. "Finally, will all of you who have received a blessing under the hands of Francis Winters please stand and remain standing." All the remainder stood.

I turned to President Winters and, with tears coursing down my cheeks, said to him, "President Winters, you see before you the result of your ministry as stake president. The Lord is pleased." Silence prevailed. Heads nodded their approval as sobs were then heard and handkerchiefs retrieved from every purse and pocket. It was one of the most

spiritually rewarding experiences of my life. No one in that vast throng will ever forget how he or she felt at that hour.

After the work of the conference had been concluded, good-byes were said and I began the drive home. I found myself singing the favorite hymn from the Sunday School days of my youth:

Thanks for the Sabbath School. Hail
to the day
When evil and error are fleeing
away.
Thanks for our teachers who labor
with care
That we in the light of the gospel
may share. . . .

Now in the morning of life let us try
Each virtue to cherish, all vice to
decry;
Strive with the noble in deeds that
exalt,
And battle with energy each childish
fault.

And then I literally boomed the chorus:

Join in the jubilee; mingle in song.
Join in the joy of the Sabbath School
throng.
Great be the glory of those who do
right,
Who overcome evil, in good take
delight.⁶

I was all alone in the car—or was I? The miles hurried by. In silent reverie I reflected on the events of the conference. Francis Winters, a bookkeeper at the community cheese factory, a man of modest means and humble home, had walked the path that Jesus walked, and like the Master he “went about doing good.”⁷ He qualified for the Savior’s description of Nathanael as he approached Him from afar: “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!”⁸

Brethren, my prayer tonight is that all of us, in whatever capacities we serve

in the Church, may merit the gentle touch on our shoulder of the Master’s hand and qualify for that same salutation received by Nathanael. That we, at the conclusion of life’s journey, may hear those divinely spoken words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant”⁹ is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. D&C 107:18–19.
2. D&C 18:10.
3. See *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975), p. 178.
4. D&C 4:3.
5. In *Journal of Discourses*, 20:23.
6. “Thanks for the Sabbath School,” *Hymns*, no. 278.
7. Acts 10:38.
8. John 1:47.
9. Matthew 25:21.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker.

Before hearing his remarks, we remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desiring to attend the broadcast and the Sunday morning session which follows must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M., daylight saving time.

Because daylight saving time begins at 2:00 A.M. tomorrow, we encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening. And as you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to the Melchizedek Priesthood Choir from the University Utah Region for the beautiful music this evening.

Following President Hinckley’s address, the choir will conclude by singing “The Priesthood of Our Lord.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder John E. Fowler of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Faith of our fathers, holy faith,
We will be true to thee till death!
[“Faith of Our Fathers,” *Hymns*,
no. 84]

I’m grateful for the singing of those words by the choir earlier in the meeting. My beloved brethren, this has been a wonderful meeting in which the inspiration of the Lord has been made manifest. I sense keenly the responsibility of speaking to you. I feel my own inadequacy and seek the strengthening, inspiring Spirit of the Lord to guide me.

Magnitude of priesthood offices

It is a tremendously humbling experience to realize that the Melchizedek Priesthood which we hold is after the order of the Son of God, and that we have responsibility and accountability to Him and our Eternal Father for all that we do in exercising the stewardship given us. What I say of myself concerning this matter is equally applicable to all who hold office in this the Church and kingdom of God. It is no simple or unimportant thing to wear the mantle of the holy priesthood in whatever office or at whatever level and in whatever responsibility we might be called to serve.

Every member of this church who has entered the waters of baptism has become a party to a sacred covenant. Each time we partake of the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, we renew that covenant. We take upon ourselves anew the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and promise to keep His commandments. He, in turn, promises that His Spirit will be with us. As Brother Didier has reminded us, we are a covenant people.

Sustaining Church officers

This afternoon we followed the customary practice of sustaining Church officers. It may appear as a somewhat

perfunctory exercise. But I remind you that it is an act of grave and serious importance, an act required under the revelation of the Lord, which states:

“Again I say unto you, that it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church” (D&C 42:11).

Concerning the sustaining of officers, President John Taylor once said:

“We hold up our right hand when voting in token before God that we will sustain those for whom we vote; and if we cannot feel to sustain them we ought not to hold up our hands, because to do this, would be to act the part of hypocrites. . . . For when we lift up our hands in this way, it is in token to God that we are sincere in what we do, and that we will sustain the parties we vote for. . . . If we agree to do a thing and do not do it, we become covenant breakers and violators of our obligations, which are, perhaps, as solemn and binding as anything we can enter into” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 21:207).

This principle applies to every priesthood quorum and every other organization of the Church where officers are sustained by the membership.

Called of God by prophecy

Almost universally the sustaining is unanimous in the affirmative, as it was this afternoon, because of acceptance in the Church of the validity of the declaration found in the fifth article of our faith:

“We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.”

Here again is set forth a significant and unique feature established by the Lord in the governance of His church. The right to nominate rests with the superior officer or officers at whatever the level. But that nomination must be sustained—that is, accepted and confirmed—by the membership of the Church. The procedure is peculiar to the Lord's church. There is no seeking for office, no jockeying for position, no campaigning to promote one's virtues. Contrast the Lord's way with the way of the world. The Lord's way is quiet; it is a way of peace; it is without fanfare or monetary costs. It is without egotism or vanity or ambition. Under the Lord's plan, those who have responsibility to select officers are governed by one overriding question: "Whom would the Lord have?" There is quiet and thoughtful deliberation. And there is much of prayer to receive the confirmation of the Holy Spirit that the choice is correct.

The calling of Elder Hales

We have sustained this afternoon a number of newly called officers. We welcome each with love and respect. Among these is Brother Robert D. Hales, to become a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. He fills a vacancy made by the passing of our beloved friend and associate, Elder Marvin J. Ashton. In filling that vacancy, each member of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve was at liberty to make suggestions. I am confident that in every case, there was solemn and earnest prayer. A choice was then made by the First Presidency, again after solemn and serious prayer. This choice was sustained by the Council of the Twelve. Today the membership of the Church in conference assembled has sustained that choice.

I give you my testimony, my brethren, that the impression to call Brother Hales to this high and sacred office came by the Holy Spirit, by the spirit of

prophecy and revelation. Brother Hales did not suggest his own name. His name was suggested by the Spirit.

He will be ordained and set apart under the hands of his associates who previously have been ordained to the holy apostleship. In that ordination, he will receive all of the priesthood keys available to men upon this earth. But there will be restrictions with reference to the exercise of some of those keys. The President of the Church holds the authority to exercise all of the keys of the priesthood at any given time. He may delegate, and in the present instance has delegated, to his Counselors and to those of the Twelve the exercise of various of those keys.

Governing the Church when the President is ill

This brings me to a matter of which I have spoken before from this pulpit. I do so again because of what some are writing and saying incident to the condition of President Benson's health.

People throughout the Church are naturally anxious to know of the President's condition. President Benson is now in his ninety-fifth year. As we have previously said from this and other pulpits, he suffers seriously from the effects of age and illness and has been unable to fulfill important duties of his sacred office. This is not a situation without precedent. Other Presidents of the Church have also been ill or unable to function fully in the closing months or years of their lives. It is possible that this will happen again in the future.

The principles and procedures which the Lord has put in place for the governance of His church make provision for any such circumstance. It is important, my brethren, that there be no doubts or concerns about the governance of the Church and the exercise of the prophetic gifts, including the right to inspiration and revelation in administering the

affairs and programs of the Church, when the President may be ill or is not able to function fully.

The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles, called and ordained to hold the keys of the priesthood, have the authority and responsibility to govern the Church, to administer its ordinances, to expound its doctrine, and to establish and maintain its practices. Each man who is ordained an Apostle and sustained a member of the Council of the Twelve is sustained as a prophet, seer, and revelator. Like those before him, President Benson was the senior Apostle at the time he was called as President of the Church. His Counselors were drawn from the Council of the Twelve. Therefore, all incumbent members of the Quorum of the First Presidency and of the Council of the Twelve have been the recipients of the keys, rights, and authority pertaining to the holy apostleship.

I quote from the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church" (D&C 107:22).

When the President is ill or not able to function fully in all of the duties of his office, his two Counselors together comprise a Quorum of the First Presidency. They carry on with the day-to-day work of the Presidency. In exceptional circumstances, when only one may be able to function, he may act in the authority of the office of the Presidency as set forth in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 102, verses 10 and 11.

When, on 10 November 1985, President Benson called his two Counselors, it was he himself who was voice in setting them apart, with the members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles also laying their hands upon the heads of

the Counselors, each one in turn, as he was set apart. President Benson was at the time in good health, fully able to function in every way.

Furthermore, following this setting apart, he signed with his own hand powers of agency giving each of his Counselors the authority to direct the business of the Church.

Under these specific and plenary delegations of authority, the Counselors in the First Presidency carry on with the regular work of this office. But any major questions of policy, procedures, programs, or doctrine are considered deliberately and prayerfully by the First Presidency and the Twelve together. These two quorums, the Quorum of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, meeting together, with every man having total freedom to express himself, consider every major question.

Decisions made in unity

And now I quote again from the word of the Lord: "And every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions, in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other" (D&C 107:27).

No decision emanates from the deliberations of the First Presidency and the Twelve without total unanimity among all concerned. At the outset in considering matters, there may be differences of opinion. These are to be expected. These men come from different backgrounds. They are men who think for themselves. But before a final decision is reached, there comes a unanimity of mind and voice.

This is to be expected if the revealed word of the Lord is followed. Again I quote from the revelation:

"The decisions of these quorums, or either of them, are to be made in all right-

teousness, in holiness, and lowliness of heart, meekness and long suffering, and in faith, and virtue, and knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity;

"Because the promise is, if these things abound in them they shall not be unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord" (D&C 107:30-31).

I add by way of personal testimony that during the twenty years I served as a member of the Council of the Twelve and during the nearly thirteen years that I have served in the First Presidency, there has never been a major action taken where this procedure was not observed. I have seen differences of opinion presented in these deliberations. Out of this very process of men speaking their minds has come a sifting and winnowing of ideas and concepts. But I have never observed serious discord or personal enmity among my Brethren. I have, rather, observed a beautiful and remarkable thing—the coming together, under the directing influence of the Holy Spirit and under the power of revelation, of divergent views until there is total harmony and full agreement. Only then is implementation made. That, I testify, represents the spirit of revelation manifested again and again in directing this the Lord's work.

I know of no other governing body of any kind of which this might be said.

This procedure obtains even in the absence of the President of the Church. I hasten to add, however, that the Brethren would not be inclined to do anything which they feel would be out of harmony with the attitude, feelings, and position of their beloved leader, the prophet of the Lord.

Keys given to all Apostles

It must be recognized that the President, when he became the senior Apostle, had moved up through the ranks of

seniority over a period of many years of service in the Quorum of the Twelve. During this time, his Brethren came to know him well. During the years of his ministry, he expressed himself on the many issues that came before that quorum. His views became well known. Those who love him, respect him, sustain and honor him as President of the Church and prophet, seer, and revelator of the Lord would not be disposed to go beyond what they recognize his position would be on any issue under consideration.

I repeat for emphasis that all who have been ordained to the holy apostleship have had bestowed upon them the keys and the authority of this most high and sacred office. In this authority reside the powers of governance of the Church and kingdom of God in the earth. There is order in the exercise of that authority. It is specifically set forth in the revelations of the Lord. It is known to all of the Brethren and is observed by all.

I have said this, some of it repetitious of what I have said before, because of the present circumstances of our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson.

God is at the helm

Now brethren, let it be understood by all that Jesus Christ stands at the head of this church, which bears His sacred name. He is watching over it. He is guiding it. Standing at the right hand of His Father, He directs this work. His is the prerogative, the power, the option to call men in His way to high and sacred offices and to release them according to His will by calling them home. He is the Master of life and death. I do not worry about the circumstances in which we find ourselves. I accept these circumstances as an expression of His will. I likewise accept the responsibility, acting with my Brethren, to do all we can

to move forward this holy work in a spirit of consecration, love, humility, duty, and loyalty.

I assure each of you and the entire world that there is unity and brotherhood with total and united fidelity to one undergirding objective, and that is to build the kingdom of God in the earth.

We know that as men we are feeble and inadequate in terms of the massive responsibility to carry the gospel of salvation to the nations of the earth and to prepare men and women everywhere to walk the path of immortality and eternal life made possible through our Father's love and the atonement of our Divine Redeemer. We know also that with the blessing of the Almighty, if we are true and faithful, if we listen to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit and follow those whisperings, we can, with our brethren and sisters, bring miracles to pass and accomplish the purposes for which we have been called under a divinely given call.

God is at the helm. Never doubt it. When we are confronted with opposition, He will open the way when there appears to be no way. Our individual efforts may be humble and appear somewhat insignificant. But the accumulated good works of all, laboring together with a common purpose, will bring to pass great and wondrous accomplishments. The world will be a better place for our united service. Our people will be a happy people, a blessed people, a people whose shepherd is our Lord, leading us through pastures green and peaceful, if we will walk after His pattern and in His light.

Response to skeptics and critics

Let not any voices of discontent disturb you. Let not the critics worry you. As Alma declared long ago, "Trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments" (Mosiah 23:14).

The truth is in this church. The authority is in this priesthood. The leadership is in this great body of priesthood at every level of governance. As the Psalmist declared, "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:4).

He who is our Savior slumbers not nor sleeps as He watches over this His kingdom.

As surely as this is the work of the Lord, there will be opposition. There will be those, perhaps not a few, who with the sophistry of beguiling words and clever design will spread doubt and seek to undermine the foundation on which this cause is established. They will have their brief day in the sun. They may have for a brief season the plaudits of the doubters and the skeptics and the critics. But they will fade and be forgotten as have their kind in the past.

Meanwhile, we shall go forward, regardless of their criticism, aware of but undeterred by their statements and actions. Said the Lord even before the Church was organized:

"Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. . . .

"Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.

"Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven" (D&C 6:34, 36-37).

God is our Father. His is "the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever" (Matthew 6:13). Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. He is the head of this church. He makes known His will and will continue to make known His will concerning it. Joseph Smith was a prophet through whom all of the keys of the priesthood under which we operate were restored in this the dispensa-

tion of the fulness of times. Each man who has succeeded him as President of the Church has been a prophet. We have a prophet today. He may not be able to speak to us as he once did. He need not. During the time that he stood before us as the President of this church, he pleaded with us to do more than we are now doing and to be better than we now are. When the Lord calls him home, there will be another to take his place.

No one knows who that will be. No one need speculate.

I leave you my blessing and love and my testimony of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "The Priesthood of Our Lord."

Elder John E. Fowler offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 164th Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 3, 1994. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "All Glory, Laud, and Honor." President Hinckley then opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this Easter morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 164th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our love to President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching conference in his apartment. We also excuse Elder Clinton Cutler because of illness.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle; in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Richard G. Scott, W. Mack Lawrence, and V. Dallas Merrill are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where

Elder Aldin Porter and Bishop Richard C. Edgley are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of these facilities to make all of this possible.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The magnificent Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, will provide the music for this session.

The choir opened these services by singing "All Glory, Laud, and Honor" and will now sing "Lead, Kindly Light," following which Elder L. Lionel Kendrick of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Lead, Kindly Light."

Elder L. Lionel Kendrick offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker this morning.

President Thomas S. Monson

On this beautiful Easter morning, prayers of gratitude for the life and mission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, fill the Sabbath air while strains of inspiring music comfort our hearts and whisper to our souls the ageless salutation, "Peace be unto you."

Straying from the path of peace

In a world where peace is such a universal quest, we sometimes wonder why violence walks our streets, accounts of murder and senseless killings fill the columns of our newspapers, and family quarrels and disputes mar the sanctity of the home and smother the tranquillity of so many lives.

Perhaps we stray from the path which leads to peace and find it necessary to pause, to ponder, and to reflect on the teachings of the Prince of Peace and determine to incorporate them in our thoughts and actions and to live a higher law, walk a more elevated road, and be better disciples of Christ.

No disputations among you

The ravages of hunger in Somalia, the brutality of hate in Bosnia, and the ethnic struggles across the globe remind us that the peace we seek will not come without effort and determination. Anger, hatred, and contention are foes not easily subdued. These enemies inevitably leave in their destructive wake tears of sorrow, the pain of conflict, and the shattered hopes of what could have been. Their sphere of influence is not restricted to the battlefields of war but can be observed altogether too frequently in the home, around the hearth, and within the heart. So soon do many forget and so late do they remember the counsel of the Lord:

"There shall be no disputations among you, . . .

"For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

"Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away."¹

In Flanders fields

As we turn backward the clock of time, we recall that some fifty-five years ago a desperately arranged peace, a conference of peace, convened in the Bavarian city of Munich. Leaders of the European powers assembled even as the world tottered on the brink of war. Their purpose, openly stated, was to pursue a course which they felt would avert war and maintain peace. Mistrust, intrigue, a quest for power doomed to failure that conference. The outcome was not "peace in our time" but rather war and destruction to a degree not previously experienced. Overlooked, or at least set aside, was the hauntingly touching appeal of one who had fallen in an earlier war. He seemed to be writing in behalf of millions of comrades—friend and foe alike:

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset
glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we
lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.

If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies
grow
In Flanders fields.²

The beaches of Normandy

Are we doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past? After such a brief interval of peace following World War I came the cataclysm of World War II. In fact, this June will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the famed landings of Allied forces on the beaches of Normandy. Tens of thousands of dignitaries and veterans will flock to the scene as the landings are reenacted. One writer observed:

“Lower Normandy has more than its share of [hallowed dead. Their bodies] lie in graves from Falaise to Cherbourg: 13,796 Americans, 17,958 British, 8,658 Canadian, 650 Polish, and around 65,000 Germans, more than 106,000 dead in all, and that is just the military, all killed in the space of a summer holiday.”³ Similar accounts could be written describing the terrible losses in other theaters of combat in that same conflict.

The way to peace

The famed statesman William Gladstone described the formula for peace when he declared: “We look forward to the time when the power of love will replace the love of power. Then will our world know the blessings of peace.”

World peace, though a lofty goal, is but an outgrowth of the personal peace each individual seeks to attain. I speak not of the peace promoted by man, but peace as promised of God. I speak of peace in our homes, peace in our hearts, even peace in our lives. Peace after the way of man is perishable. Peace after the manner of God will prevail.

We are reminded that “anger doesn’t solve anything. It builds nothing, but it can destroy everything.”⁴ The consequences of conflict are so devastating

that we yearn for guidance—even a way to ensure our success as we seek the path to peace. What is the way to obtain such a universal blessing? Are there prerequisites? Let us remember that to obtain God’s blessings, one must do God’s bidding. May I suggest three ideas to prompt our thinking and guide our footsteps:

1. Search inward;
2. Reach outward; and
3. Look heavenward.

Search inward

First: Search inward. Self-evaluation is always a difficult procedure. We are so frequently tempted to gloss over areas which demand correction and dwell endlessly on our individual strengths. President Ezra Taft Benson counsels us:

“The price of peace is righteousness. Men and nations may loudly proclaim, ‘Peace, peace,’ but there shall be no peace until individuals nurture in their souls those principles of personal purity, integrity, and character which foster the development of peace. Peace cannot be imposed. It must come from the lives and hearts of men. There is no other way.”⁵

Elder Richard L. Evans observed: “To find peace—the peace within, the peace that passeth understanding—men must live in honesty, honoring each other, honoring obligations, working willingly, loving and cherishing loved ones, serving and considering others, with patience, with virtue, with faith and forbearance, with the assurance that life is for learning, for serving, for repenting, and improving. And God be thanked for the blessed principle of repenting and improving, which is a way that is open to us all.”⁶

A return to family values

The place of parents in the home and family is of vital importance as we examine our personal responsibilities

in this regard. Recently a distinguished group met in conference to examine the increase of violence in the lives of individuals, particularly the young. Some observations from their deliberations are helpful to us as we examine our priorities:

"A society that views graphic violence as entertainment . . . should not be surprised when senseless violence shatters the dreams of its youngest and brightest. . . .

"Unemployment and despair can lead to desperation. But most people will not commit desperate acts if they have been taught that dignity, honesty and integrity are more important than revenge or rage; if they understand that respect and kindness ultimately give one a better chance at success. . . .

"The women of the anti-violence summit have hit on the solution—the only one that can reverse a downward spiral of destructive behavior and senseless pain. A return to old-fashioned family values will work wonders."⁷

Love at home

So frequently we mistakenly believe that our children need more things, when in reality their silent pleadings are simply for more of our time. The accumulation of wealth or the multiplication of assets belies the Master's teaching:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."⁸

The other evening I saw large masses of parents and children crossing an intersection in Salt Lake City en route to the Delta Center to see the Disney on Ice production of *Beauty and the Beast*.

I actually pulled my car over to the curb to watch the gleeful throng. Fathers, who I am certain were cajoled into going to the event, held tightly in their hands the small and clutching hands of their precious children. Here was love in action. Here was an unspoken sermon of caring. Here was a rearranging of time as a God-given priority.

Truly peace will reign triumphant when we improve ourselves after the pattern taught by the Lord. Then we will appreciate the deep spirituality hidden behind the simple words of a familiar song: "There is beauty all around when there's love at home."⁹

Reach outward

Second: Reach outward. Though exaltation is a personal matter, and while individuals are saved not as a group but indeed as individuals, yet one cannot live in a vacuum. Membership in the Church calls forth a determination to serve. A position of responsibility may not be of recognized importance, nor may the reward be broadly known. Service, to be acceptable to the Savior, must come from willing minds, ready hands, and pledged hearts.

Occasionally discouragement may darken our pathway; frustration may be a constant companion. In our ears there may sound the sophistry of Satan as he whispers, "You cannot save the world; your small efforts are meaningless. You haven't time to be concerned for others." Trusting in the Lord, let us turn our heads from such falsehoods and make certain our feet are firmly planted in the path of service and our hearts and souls dedicated to follow the example of the Lord. In moments when the light of resolution dims and when the heart grows faint, we can take comfort from His promise:

"Be not weary in well-doing. . . . Out of small things proceedeth that which is great.

"Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind."¹⁰

During the past year, the Primary organization has conducted an effort to have the children become better acquainted with the holy temples of God. Frequently this has entailed a visit to the temple grounds. The laughter of small children, the joy of unfettered youth, and the exuberance of energy displayed by them gladdened the heart of this observer. As a loving teacher guided a boy or girl to the large door of the Salt Lake Temple and the little one reached out and up to touch the temple, I could almost see the Master welcoming the little children to His side and could almost hear His comforting words: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."¹¹

Look heavenward

Number three: Look heavenward. As we do, we find it comforting and satisfying to communicate with our Heavenly Father through prayer, that path to spiritual power—even a passport to peace. We are reminded of His beloved Son, the Prince of Peace, that pioneer who literally showed the way for others to follow. His divine plan can save us from the Babylons of sin, complacency, and error. His example points the way. When faced with temptation, He shunned it. When offered the world, He declined it. When asked for His life, He gave it.

On one significant occasion, Jesus took a text from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound"¹²—a clear pronouncement of the peace that passeth all understanding.

Frequently, death comes as an intruder. It is an enemy that suddenly

appears in the midst of life's feast, putting out its lights and its gaiety. Death lays its heavy hand upon those dear to us and, at times, leaves us baffled and wondering. In certain situations, as in great suffering and illness, death comes as an angel of mercy. But to those bereaved, the Master's promise of peace is the comforting balm which heals: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."¹³ "I go to prepare a place for you . . . ; that where I am, there ye may be also."¹⁴

Letter from Major Sullivan Ballou

How I pray that all who have loved then lost might know the reality of the Resurrection and have the unshakable knowledge that families can be forever. One such was a Major Sullivan Ballou, who, during the time of the American Civil War, wrote a touching letter to his wife—just one week before he was killed in the Battle of Bull Run. With me, feel the love of his soul, his trust in God, his courage, his faith.

"July 14, 1861

"Camp Clark, Washington

"My very dear Sarah:

"The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days—perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write again, I feel impelled to write a few lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more.

"I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in, the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. . . . I am . . . perfectly willing . . . to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this Government. . . .

"Sarah, my love for you is deathless; it seems to bind me with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and

bears me unresistibly on with all these chains to the battle field.

"The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them so long. And hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together, and seen our sons grown up to honorable manhood around us. I have, I know, but few and small claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me—perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar, that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed. If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battle field, it will whisper your name. Forgive [me] my . . . faults, and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless and foolish I have oftentimes been! How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot upon your happiness. . . .

"But, O Sarah! If the dead can come back to this earth and the unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the gladdest days and in the darkest nights . . . always, always, and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath, as the cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by. Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again."¹⁵

I know that my Redeemer lives

The darkness of death can ever be dispelled by the light of revealed truth. "I am the resurrection, and the life," spoke the Master. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."¹⁶

Added to His own words are those of the angels, spoken to the weeping

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary as they approached the tomb to care for the body of their Lord: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."¹⁷

Such is the message of Easter morn. He lives! And because He lives all shall indeed live again. This knowledge provides the peace for loved ones of those whose graves are marked by the crosses of Normandy, those hallowed resting places in Flanders fields where the poppies blow in springtime, and for those who rest in countless other locations, including the depths of the sea. "Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives: 'I know that my Redeemer lives!'"¹⁸ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 11:28–30.
2. John McCrae, "In Flanders Fields," in *The Best Loved Poems of the American People*, sel. Hazel Felleman (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Publishing Co., 1936), p. 429.
3. David Hewson, "More than 13,000 Americans Are Buried in Normandy," *Deseret News*, 13 Mar. 1994, sec. T, p. 4.
4. L. Douglas Wilder, in Jill Lawrence, "Early Hardships Shaped Candidates," *Deseret News*, 1 Dec. 1991, sec. A, p. 2.
5. "Purposeful Living," *Listen, A Journal of Better Living*, Jan.–Mar. 1955, p. 19.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1959, p. 128.
7. "Family Values in a Violent Society," *Deseret News*, 16 Jan. 1994, sec. A, p. 12.
8. Matthew 6:19–21.
9. "Love at Home," *Hymns*, no. 294.
10. D&C 64:33–34.
11. Mark 10:14.
12. Isaiah 61:1.
13. John 14:27.
14. John 14:2–3.
15. In Dennis Lythgoe, "Extraordinary Letter Shows How Civil War Touched Ordinary Lives," *Deseret News*, 16 Oct. 1990, sec. C, p. 3.
16. John 11:25–26.

17. Luke 24:5-6.

18. "I Know That My Redeemer Lives,"
Hymns, no. 136.

The choir sang "The Heavens Resound."

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson has spoken to us, and the choir has sung "The Heavens Resound."

We will now be pleased to hear from President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

President Howard W. Hunter

"What manner of men ought ye to be?"

I am delighted to be with you today and to greet this wonderful general conference audience. In so doing, may I thank you for the prayers you offer in behalf of the General Authorities, for our health and our travel and our personal circumstances. We are blessed by these faithful prayers offered, and we wish you to know of our gratitude.

One of the most important questions ever asked to mortal men was asked by the Son of God himself, the Savior of the world. To a group of disciples in the New World, a group anxious to be taught by him and even more anxious because he would soon be leaving them, he asked, "What manner of men ought ye to be?" Then in the same breath he gave this answer: "Even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27).

Jesus Christ—the perfect example

The world is full of people who are willing to tell us, "Do as I say." Surely we have no lack of advice givers on about every subject. But we have so few who are prepared to say, "Do as I do." And, of course, only One in human history could rightfully and properly make that declaration. History provides many examples of good men and women, but even the best of mortals are flawed in some way or another. None could serve as a perfect model nor as an infallible pattern to follow, however well-intentioned they might be.

Only Christ can be our ideal, our "bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:16). Only he can say without *any* reservation: "Follow me; learn of me; do the things you have seen me do. Drink of my water and eat of my bread. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the law and the light. Look unto me and ye shall live. Love one another as I have loved you" (see Matthew 11:29; 16:24; John 4:13-14; 6:35, 51; 7:37; 13:34; 14:6; 3 Nephi 15:9; 27:21).

My, what a clear and resonant call! What certainty and example in a day of uncertainty and absence of example.

We all miss President Ezra Taft Benson today and wish that he could address us. I wonder if I might pay a small tribute to him by quoting something he said from this pulpit on the subject of Christ's marvelous example. He said (and I add my own witness to it):

"Nearly two thousand years ago a perfect Man walked the earth—Jesus the Christ. . . . In His life, all the virtues were lived and kept in perfect balance; He taught men truth—that they might be free; His example and precepts provide the great standard—the only sure way—for all mankind" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 8).

The great standard! The only sure way! The light and the life of the world! How grateful we should be that God sent his Only Begotten Son to earth

to do at least two things that no other person could have done. The first task Christ did as a perfect, sinless Son was to redeem all mankind from the Fall, providing an atonement for Adam's sin and for our own sins if we will accept and follow him. The second great thing he did was to set a perfect example of right living, of kindness and mercy and compassion, in order that all of the rest of mankind might know how to live, know how to improve, and know how to become more godlike.

Become even as Christ is

Let us follow the Son of God in all ways and in all walks of life. Let us make him our exemplar and our guide. We should at every opportunity ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" and then be more courageous to act upon the answer. We must follow Christ, in the best sense of that word. We must be about his work as he was about his Father's. We should try to be like him, even as the Primary children sing, "Try, try, try" ("Jesus Once Was a Little Child," *Children's Songbook*, p. 55). To the extent that our mortal powers permit, we should make every effort to become like Christ—the one perfect and sinless example this world has ever seen.

His beloved disciple John often said of Christ, "We beheld his glory" (John 1:14). They observed the Savior's perfect life as he worked and taught and prayed. So too ought we to behold his glory in every way we can.

We must know Christ better than we know him; we must remember him more often than we remember him; we must serve him more valiantly than we serve him. Then we will drink water springing up unto eternal life and will eat the bread of life.

What manner of men and women ought we to be? Even as he is. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Dearest Children, God Is Near You."

President Hinckley

We have appreciated the remarks of President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and also the choir singing "Dearest Children, God Is Near You."

We will now be pleased to hear the testimony of Bishop Merrill J. Bateman, who was sustained yesterday as the Presiding Bishop of the Church.

Bishop Merrill J. Bateman

Stretching the cords of the tent

Brothers and sisters, we have witnessed a miracle; I'm so grateful for Elder Hunter in exemplifying whom we should follow.

It is with a deep sense of concern and inadequacy that I come to the pulpit today. For two days, two passages of scripture have dominated my thoughts. One is Daniel, chapter 2, and the other is the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, both

of them related. Daniel 2 describes the vision of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel's interpretation of the stone cut out of the mountain in the last days, representing the kingdom established by God that will roll across the earth, crushing peacefully all nations and inviting all to come to Christ (see Daniel 2:44–45).

Isaiah, fifty-fourth chapter, verses one and two, talk about the tent which represents the gospel of Christ. He states that in the last days the cords of the tent

would be stretched across the earth and stakes would be planted in every land. We literally are seeing that fulfilled today.

As I have thought about these passages, I have thought of the awesome task of supporting the Brethren in carrying the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. The responsibility of the Presiding Bishopric and all those who work with them is to aid the Brethren in their worldwide ministry. Because of those visions of Isaiah and Daniel, I plead with you, brothers and sisters, for help through your faith and prayers. I desire with all my heart to be a servant to these men and to the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Tribute to wife

Today I pay tribute to my wife. She has stood beside me for thirty-five years. We moved nineteen times in the first twenty years of our marriage. She thought she had married an unstable man. But I pay tribute to her. I have marveled in the last eight months as she has worked by my side in the Asia North Area. Weekend after weekend we have gone to conferences, and I have watched as this little blonde-haired woman, among all these beautiful black-haired Saints, has won their hearts over and over again. There have been crowds of women around her giving her hugs as we have left. She is a mother of seven children and grandmother to fifteen. More importantly, she is my eternal companion. I'm grateful for her.

A young Japanese man gains a testimony

May I close my testimony with a short story. A few months ago, Sister Bateman and I were touring the Japan Fukuoka Mission. The missionaries in Kumamoto introduced us to a young Japanese brother who had just joined the Church and then told us of his con-

version. He was from a non-Christian background. When he met the missionaries, he was interested in the message. He liked the young men who were teaching him, but during the course of the lessons he could not understand or feel the need for a Savior. The missionaries took him through the lessons and taught him about our Heavenly Father, Christ, and the plan of salvation, but he didn't have a witness. The missionaries wondered what they should do and decided one day to show him a film, a Church film that deals with the Atonement. It is called *The Bridge*. The young man saw the film and was disturbed by it, went home, and couldn't sleep all that night, but still he didn't have a witness.

The next morning he went to work. He worked in an optician's shop making eyeglasses. During the course of the day, an elderly woman came in. He remembered her coming in a few weeks before. She had broken her glasses. She needed a new pair. When she had come in earlier, she didn't have enough money and had gone away to save more in order to purchase the new glasses. As she came in that day, she again showed him her spectacles and showed him the money that she now had. He realized that she didn't have enough yet. Then a thought came to him: *I have some money. I don't need to tell her. I can make up the difference.* So he told her the money she had was adequate, took her glasses, made an appointment for her to return when he had finished making the spectacles, and sent her on her way.

She returned later. He had the glasses ready for her. He handed them to her, and she put them on. "*Mimasu! Mimasu!* I see. I see." Then she began to cry. At that point, a burning sensation began to grow within his bosom and swelled within him. He said, "*Wakari masu! Wakari masu!* I understand. I understand." He began to cry. Out the door he ran, looking for the missionaries. When he found them, he said, "I

see! My eyes have been opened! I know that Jesus is the Son of God. I know the stone was rolled away from the tomb and on that glorious Easter morning He arose from the dead. He can make up the difference in my life when I fall short."

I pledge my all to the service of the Master. I have a deep testimony of Him and of His work on this earth. He is the one who guides and directs the affairs of this church. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Our new Presiding Bishop, Merrill J. Bateman, has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord." Bishop H. David Burton, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

Bishop H. David Burton

I know that Bishop Edgley joins me this day in expressing our appreciation for the many years of service we have had with Elder Hales. We deeply love and appreciate him, and we feel like we've been taught at his feet for a number of years. We look forward to laboring in service with Bishop Bateman.

I was thrilled this morning, as I'm sure all of you were, to see and to hear President Hunter, a loving and gentle Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ who is an exceptional example of one who repeatedly displays extraordinary *courage* in *hearkening* to the will of his Father in Heaven.

President Hunter has sons who served their missions in Australia at the same time I served there. During this time, President Hunter received his call to the holy apostleship. Numerous of these missionaries have regarded him as "our Apostle." He is one of my heroes.

On this Sabbath day, a Sunday set aside to celebrate Easter, Christians should remember with thanksgiving the events surrounding the most momentous Sunday the world has ever known—the Sunday the Savior burst his three-day prison, completing victory over death. Descriptions of these events are vividly etched in my heart and mind.

Jesus' crucifixion

I can envision Jesus bearing the heavy crossbeam as the procession winds its way along the narrow streets of Jerusalem, through the massive wall at the city gate, to a place called Golgotha. I can hear women weeping and Jesus offering words of warning: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children" (Luke 23:28). The Savior knew destructive events would shortly come.

In my mind's eye I can see the executioners going about their abhorrent, heartless tasks. I can hear the Savior, in the spirit of compassion, appealing for his crucifiers as he uttered, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

As this brutal incident proceeded, one of the thieves also suffering crucifixion discerned something divine in the Savior's demeanor and said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Jesus responded with a promise only he could make: "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42–43).

Picture in your minds a weeping mother and a devoted disciple invited past the centurion to the foot of the cross. Jesus, in his agony, looked down

upon them and said to Mary, with an economy of words, "Woman, behold thy son!" and, looking steadily at John, said, "Behold thy mother!" (John 19:26-27).

Who can forget the pleading voice calling out at about the ninth hour through the oppressive darkness that gripped the land, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). The Father seemingly withdrew, allowing the Savior of mankind to complete his victory over death and sin.

I can imagine the bitter taste of the vinegar that was pressed to his lips when he said, "I thirst" (John 19:28), his one recorded response to physical suffering.

When the atoning sacrifice had been accepted, Jesus declared in a loud voice, "It is finished" (John 19:30). And then in final petition he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). His body sagged on the cross; Jesus gave up his life.

Jesus' victory over death

In the early morning darkness of the third day, Sunday, the first Easter, the earth began to quake. An angel rolled away the stone blocking the tomb and announced:

"Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

"He is not here: for he is risen, as he said" (Matthew 28:2, 5-6).

Later in the morning, the grieving Mary Magdalene returned to the cold, dreary, empty tomb. She heard a familiar voice call, "Mary." Turning, she saw the Lord and reached out to him. In a worshipful greeting she lovingly declared, "Rabboni." Jesus responded, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:16-17).

During the following forty days, the Savior frequently taught and ate with his Apostles. He concluded with the glo-

rious charge: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Jesus' courage to obey

Jesus Christ is *the* magnificent example of courage in hearkening to the will of the Father.

The wise Psalmist said, "Be of good *courage*, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord" (Psalm 31:24; italics added).

President Thomas S. Monson explained *courage* by saying, "Courage becomes a living and attractive virtue when it is regarded not as a willingness to die manfully, but the determination to live decently" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1972, p. 72; or *Ensign*, July 1972, p. 70).

In latter-day scriptures the Lord often uses action words in the first sentences of his revelations. Interestingly, *hearken* is used a number of times in this fashion. We are counseled by the Lord, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, to *behold*, to *hearken*, to *listen*, to *hear*, in over sixty revelations.

Jay's courage to hearken

May I tell you about a young man who had the *courage to hearken*. Elder Marion D. Hanks introduced us to Jay nearly twenty years ago at general conference. Elder Hanks described a twelve-year-old deacon whose body suffered from muscular atrophy. His loving father carried him as he passed the sacrament, gathered fast offerings, and went about his Scouting activities.

The remainder of Jay's story exemplifies inspiration and *courage*. His body continued to suffer the ravages of his disease while his mind continued to be inquisitive and very bright. Because of his disease, Jay was unable to attend

high school but rather had home study. He loved seminary and attended regularly. He was one of the speakers at his seminary graduation, addressing his classmates from his wheelchair. Jay's positive approach to life and his cheery, radiant disposition were uplifting. Jay loved to attend dances. He made his wheelchair dance. He enjoyed music and often sang the hymns of the Restoration in beautiful, clear, melodic tones.

More than anything, Jay loved the Lord. When he turned nineteen, he wanted to *hearken* to the prophet's request that every young man serve a mission. By this time, Jay spent much of his time on a soft mat on the living room floor of his home. Much of the muscle tissue of his body had wasted away. He desperately wanted to serve a mission. He found a way to serve in spite of his handicap. While lying on his back on the floor, he painstakingly prepared, with the help of some friends, over 150 copies of the Book of Mormon with his picture and testimony. They were sent to friends serving missions around the world for distribution. Jay received a letter from President Kimball expressing gratitude for his service and *courage* in *hearkening* to the call to missionary service.

Thanks to "angel" parents, Jay attended college. He was pushed by his dad from class to class. At times it was necessary for him to lie on a table at the rear of the classroom. He was an excellent student, receiving distinguished grades in difficult courses. Jay passed away three years ago, but his splendid example of one who *courageously hearkened* lives on.

Courage to avoid evil music and movies

Someone once said that the *courageous* man finds a way, and the ordinary man finds an excuse. Recently I learned of some *courageous* young people who *hearkened* to the counsel of their stake presidency.

In the Boise Idaho North Stake, a loving stake presidency helped their youth have a better understanding of the pitfalls of being continually bombarded by the degrading lyrics of many of today's popular songs and the indecent images portrayed in some movies and videos. They were taught that these mediums can produce much that is positive, inspiring, uplifting, and attractive; or they can also desensitize the mind and make what is wrong and evil look normal, exciting, and acceptable.

Many of the young people hearkened to their stake presidency and courageously destroyed their tapes, discs, and videos which were not "virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy" (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Young people, please don't listen to music that contains ideas that contradict principles of the gospel. "Don't listen to music that promotes Satanism or other evil practices, encourages immorality, uses foul and offensive language, or drives away the Spirit" (*For the Strength of Youth* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1990], p. 14).

The folly of underestimating Satan

Some may feel they are too intelligent or sophisticated to be influenced by the craftiness of Satan. What a tragic miscalculation. Nephi warned us of the perils of this misjudgment when he said:

"O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they *hearken* not unto the counsel of God. . .

"But to be learned is good if they *hearken* unto the counsels of God" (2 Nephi 9:28-29; italics added).

President Hinckley said: "One of the great tragedies we witness almost daily is the tragedy of men of high aim and low achievement. Their motives are noble. Their proclaimed ambition is praiseworthy. Their capacity is great. But their

discipline is weak. They succumb to indolence. Appetite robs them of will" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1979, p. 88; or *Ensign*, May 1979, p. 65).

Purge ourselves of pride

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to our ability to *hearken courageously* to the word of the Lord involves our egos, vain ambitions, and pride. It seems that the proud find it burdensome to hear and accept the instruction of God. We are told in Proverbs that "pride goeth before destruction" (Proverbs 16:18). The proud are more anxious about man's judgment than they are of God's judgment.

You may remember a story about a ship's captain who had a problem with his pride. One night at sea, this captain saw what looked like the light of another ship heading toward him. He had his signalman blink to the other ship: "Change your course 10 degrees south." The reply came back, "Change *your* course 10 degrees north." The ship's captain answered, "I am a *captain*. Change *your* course south." To which the reply came, "Well, I am a seaman first class. Change *your* course north." This so infuriated the captain, he signaled back, "I say change *your* course south. I am on a battleship!" To which the reply came back, "And I say change *your* course north. I am in a lighthouse" (adapted from *Hope Health Letter* [Kalamazoo, Mich.: Hope Health Institute], Oct. 1993, p. 1).

Like the captain, if we fail to modify our course and purge ourselves of pride, we may find ourselves shipwrecked upon the shoals of life, unable to *courageously hearken* to the beckonings of the Savior to "come unto me" (Matthew 11:28).

I can be courageous

I like what Edgar A. Guest said in a few lines of his poem entitled "Equipment":

Two arms, two hands, two legs, two eyes,
And a brain to use if you would be wise.

With this equipment they all began,
So start for the top and say, "I can." . . .

You are the handicap you must face,
You are the one who must choose your place,
You must say where you want to go,
How much you will study the truth to know.

God has equipped you for life, but He

Lets you decide what you want to be. . . .

Courage must come from the soul within,

The man must furnish the will to win.
So figure it out for yourself, my lad,
You were born with all that the great have had,

With your equipment they all began.
Get hold of yourself, and say: "I can."
[*Collected Verse of Edgar A. Guest* (Chicago: Reilly and Lee Co., 1934), pp. 666-67; italics added]

May we all "get hold of [ourselves]," as Edgar Guest so beautifully suggests, and say, "I can be courageous in hearkening to the invitation of the Lord." "Live in such a way that people who know you but don't know Christ will want to know Christ because they know you" (author unknown). In the holy name of him for whose glorious resurrection and atoning sacrifice I express my deepest appreciation this Easter Sunday—even Jesus Christ—amen.

President Hinckley

Bishop H. David Burton, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, has spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Tolerance

Dear brothers and sisters, I join my brethren in extending Easter greetings to each of you, while expressing personal gratitude for the atonement of Jesus Christ, for His example, and for His teachings that have motivated my message today.

I have been impressed to speak on the subject of tolerance—a virtue much needed in our turbulent world. But in discussing this topic, we must recognize at the outset that there is a difference between *tolerance* and *tolerate*. Your gracious tolerance for an individual does not grant him or her license to do wrong, nor does your tolerance obligate you to tolerate his or her misdeed. That distinction is fundamental to an understanding of this vital virtue.

I attended a “laboratory of tolerance” some months ago when I had the privilege of participating in the Parliament of the World’s Religions. There I conversed with good men and women representing many religious groups. Again I sensed the advantages of ethnic and cultural diversity and reflected once more on the importance of religious freedom and tolerance.

I marvel at the inspiration of the Prophet Joseph Smith when he penned the eleventh article of faith: “We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.”

That noble expression of religious tolerance is particularly poignant in light of the Prophet’s personal persecution. On one occasion he wrote, “I am at this time persecuted the worst of any man on the earth, as well as this people, . . . and all our sacred rights are trampled under the feet of the mob.”¹

Joseph Smith endured incessant persecution and finally heartless martyrdom—at the hands of the intolerant. His brutal fate stands as a stark reminder that we must never be guilty of *any* sin sown by the seed of intolerance.

Two great commandments to love

Revealed to that revered prophet was the fulness of the gospel. He was tutored by the resurrected Christ, whom Joseph adored. He taught doctrines declared by the Lord, including these He gave in response to the question of an exacting lawyer:

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”²

Hence, our highest priorities in life are to love God and to love our neighbors. That broadly includes neighbors in our own family, our community, our nation, and our world. Obedience to the second commandment facilitates obedience to the first commandment. “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.”³

Parental love

That concept is easy for mothers and fathers to understand. Parental love includes gratitude for service extended to any of their children, especially in their time of need.

I was amused recently when one of our grown children confided that she

had always thought that she was her daddy's favorite daughter. She was surprised to discover later that each of her eight sisters harbored that same feeling. Only when they had become mothers themselves did they realize that parents hardly have favorites. (Incidentally, our only son never had to wonder who was our favorite son.)

Our Father in Heaven loves all of His children too. Peter taught that "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."⁴

Yet His children can be so intolerant with one another. Neighboring factions, whether they be identified as groups or gangs, schools or states, counties or countries, often develop animosity. Such tendencies make me wonder: Cannot boundary lines exist without becoming battle lines? Could not people unite in waging war against the evils that beset mankind instead of waging war on each other? Sadly, answers to these questions are often no. Through the years, discrimination based on ethnic or religious identity has led to senseless slaughter, vicious pogroms, and countless acts of cruelty. The face of history is pocked by the ugly scars of intolerance.

How different our world would be if all parents would apply this inspired instruction from the Book of Mormon:

"Ye will not suffer your children . . . that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another. . . .

"But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another."⁵

If such training occurred, children and parents around this globe would join in singing, "Fill our hearts with sweet forgiving; Teach us tolerance and love."⁶ Men and women would respect their neighbors and the beliefs held sacred by them. No longer would ethnic jokes and cultural slurs be acceptable. The tongue of the tolerant speaks no guile.

Independence and cooperation

While we strive for the virtue of tolerance, other commendable qualities need not be lost. Tolerance does not require the surrender of noble purpose or of individual identity. The Lord gave instruction to leaders of His restored church to establish and maintain institutional integrity—"that the church may stand independent."⁷

Meanwhile, its members are encouraged to join with like-minded citizens in doing good.⁸ We are grateful for the many examples of heroic service rendered in times of earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, or other disasters. Such cooperative efforts to help neighbors in distress transcend any barriers posed by religion, race, or culture. Those good deeds are latter-day love in action!

Humanitarian relief rendered by members of this church is extensive, multinational, and generally unpublicized. Even so, there are doubtless many who wonder why we don't do more to assist the innumerable worthy causes to which our hearts respond.

Of course we are concerned with the need for ambulances in the valley below. But at the same time, we cannot ignore the greater need for protective guardrails on the cliffs above. Limited resources needed for the accomplishment of the higher work cannot be depleted in rescue efforts that provide only temporary relief.

The biblical prophet Nehemiah must have felt that same commitment to his important calling. When he was asked to divert attention away from his primary purpose, he replied, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?"⁹

Fortunately, we in the Church rarely have to make such a decision. We consider love of neighbor an integral part of our mission. And while we serve one another, we continue to build a spiritual

house of refuge on the cliffs above. Such a sanctuary becomes a blessing for all mankind. We are but the builders; the architect is almighty God.

Missionary responsibilities

Latter-day Saints throughout the world work side by side with others—regardless of race, color, or creed—hoping to be good examples worthy of emulation. The Savior said:

"I give unto you a commandment, that every man, both elder, priest, teacher, and also member, . . . prepare and accomplish the things which I have commanded.

"And let your preaching be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness."¹⁰

This we are to do with tolerance. While in Moscow in June 1991, in that spirit of preparation and with sincere respect for leaders of other religious denominations, Elder Dallin H. Oaks and I had the privilege of meeting with the presiding official of the Russian Orthodox Church. We were accompanied by Elder Hans B. Ringger and the mission president, Gary L. Browning. Patriarch Aleksei was most gracious in sharing a memorable hour with us. We perceived the great difficulties endured for so many years by this kind man and his fellow believers. We thanked him for his perseverance and for his faith. Then we assured him of our good intentions and of the importance of the message that missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would be teaching among his countrymen. We affirmed that ours is a global church and that we honor and obey the laws of each land in which we labor.¹¹

To those with an interest in the fullness of the restored gospel—regardless of nationality or religious background—we say as did Elder Bruce R. McConkie: "Keep all the truth and all the good that you have. Do not abandon any sound or

proper principle. Do not forsake any standard of the past which is good, righteous, and true. Every truth found in every church in all the world we believe. But we also say this to all men—Come and take the added light and truth that God has restored in our day. The more truth we have, the greater is our joy here and now; the more truth we receive, the greater is our reward in eternity. This is our invitation to men [and women] of good will everywhere."¹²

Each of you with a testimony of the truth of the restored gospel has opportunity to share that precious gift. The Lord expects you to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness."¹³

Baptism transcends background

On every continent and across isles of the sea, the faithful are being gathered into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Differences in cultural background, language, gender, and facial features fade into insignificance as members lose themselves in service to their beloved Savior. Paul's declaration is being fulfilled:

"As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."¹⁴

Only the comprehension of the true Fatherhood of God can bring full appreciation of the true brotherhood of man. That understanding inspires desire to build bridges of cooperation instead of walls of segregation.

Our Creator decreed "that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another."¹⁵

Intolerance seeds contention; tolerance supersedes contention. Tolerance is the key that opens the door to mutual understanding and love.

Risks of boundless tolerance

Now may I offer an important note of caution. An erroneous assumption could be made that if a little of something is good, a lot must be better. Not so! Overdoses of needed medication can be toxic. Boundless mercy could oppose justice. So tolerance, without limit, could lead to spineless permissiveness.

The Lord drew boundary lines to define acceptable limits of tolerance. Danger rises when those divine limits are disobeyed. Just as parents teach little children not to run and play in the street, the Savior taught us that we need not tolerate evil. "Jesus went into the temple of God . . . and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers."¹⁶ Though He loved the sinner, the Lord said that He "cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance."¹⁷ His Apostle Paul specified some of those sins in a letter to the Galatians. The list included "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, . . . wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like."¹⁸

To Paul's list I might add the regrettable attitudes of bigotry, hypocrisy, and prejudice. These were also decried in 1834 by early Church leaders who foresaw the eventual rise of this church "amid the frowns of bigots and the calumny of hypocrites."¹⁹ The Prophet Joseph Smith prayed that "prejudices may give way before the truth."²⁰ Hatred stirs up strife²¹ and digs beneath the dignity of mature men and women in our enlightened era.

Paul's list included "uncleanness." As members of the Church entrusted with its holy temples, we are commanded that "no unclean thing shall be permit-

ted to come into [His] house to pollute it."²²

That assignment requires great fortitude as well as love. In former days, disciples of the Lord "were firm, and would suffer even unto death rather than commit sin."²³ In latter days, devoted disciples of the Lord are just as firm. Real love for the sinner may compel courageous confrontation—not acquiescence! Real love does not support self-destructive behavior.

Tolerance and mutual respect

Our commitment to the Savior causes us to scorn sin yet heed His commandment to love our neighbors. Together we live on this earth, which is to be tended, subdued, and shared with gratitude.²⁴ Each of us can help to make life in this world a more pleasant experience. Not long ago the First Presidency and the Twelve approved a public statement from which I quote:

"It is morally wrong for any person or group to deny anyone his or her inalienable dignity on the tragic and abhorrent theory of racial or cultural superiority.

"We call upon all people everywhere to recommit themselves to the time-honored ideals of tolerance and mutual respect. We sincerely believe that as we acknowledge one another with consideration and compassion we will discover that we can all peacefully coexist despite our deepest differences."²⁵

That pronouncement is a contemporary confirmation of the Prophet Joseph's earlier entreaty for tolerance. Unitedly we may respond. Together we may stand, intolerant of transgression but tolerant of neighbors with differences they hold sacred. Our beloved brothers and sisters throughout the world are *all* children of God. He is our Father. His Son, Jesus, is the Christ. His church has been restored to the earth in these latter days to bless all of God's children. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *History of the Church*, 5:157.
2. Matthew 22:36–40; see also John 13:34–35; 15:12, 17; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11–12; 2 John 1:5.
3. Mosiah 2:17.
4. Acts 10:34–35; see also D&C 38:16, 24–26.
5. Mosiah 4:14–15; see also Romans 12:18.
6. “In Humility, Our Savior,” *Hymns*, no. 172.
7. D&C 78:14.
8. See Articles of Faith 1:13.
9. Nehemiah 6:3.
10. D&C 38:40–41; see also D&C 88:81.
11. See Articles of Faith 1:12.
12. In Conference Report, Tahiti Area Conference 1976, p. 31.
13. 1 Peter 3:15; see also D&C 60:2.
14. Galatians 3:27–28.
15. Mosiah 18:21; see also Mosiah 23:15; 4 Nephi 1:13.
16. Matthew 21:12; see also Mark 11:15.
17. D&C 1:31.
18. Galatians 5:19–21.
19. Joseph Smith—History 1:71, footnote.

20. D&C 109:56; see also v. 70.
21. See Proverbs 10:12.
22. D&C 109:20.
23. Alma 24:19.
24. See Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28; Abraham 4:28; D&C 59:15–21.
25. “Church Exhorts Ethnic, Religious Tolerance,” *Church News*, 24 Oct. 1992, p. 4.

The choir sang “Know This, That Ev’ry Soul Is Free.”

President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung “Know This, That Ev’ry Soul Is Free.”

Following my remarks the choir will conclude by singing “The Lord Be with Us.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Augusto A. Lim of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley**The greatest miracle in human history**

My beloved brethren and sisters, I add my testimony to the testimony of my brethren this Easter morning. For all of Christendom, for all of mankind, today is observed as the anniversary of the greatest miracle in human history. It is the miracle that encompasses all who have lived upon the earth, all who now live upon the earth, and all who will yet live upon the earth. Nothing done before or since has so affected mankind as the atonement wrought by Jesus of Nazareth, who died on Calvary’s cross, was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and on the third day arose from the grave as the Living Son of the Living

God—the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

As mortals we all must die. Death is as much a part of eternal life as is birth. Looked at through mortal eyes, without comprehension of the eternal plan of God, death is a bleak, final, and unrelenting experience described by Shakespeare as “the undiscover’d country, from whose bourn / No traveller returns” (*Hamlet*, act 3, scene 1, lines 79–80).

But our Eternal Father, whose children we are, made possible a far better thing through the sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This had to be. Can anyone believe that the Great Creator would provide for life and growth and achievement only to snuff it

all into oblivion in the process of death? Reason says no. Justice demands a better answer. The God of heaven has given one. The Lord Jesus Christ provided it.

His was the ultimate sacrifice, His the sublime victory.

New Testament witnesses

Doubters there may be. But is there a more fully attested experience in the history of humankind than the resurrection of Jesus that first Easter morn? He spoke with Mary, who was first at the tomb. He spoke with the other women who ran to tell their brethren, two of whom came running. He appeared unto ten of His Apostles, Thomas being absent. And then He came again when Thomas was present. The doubter, upon seeing Him, declared, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). He talked with the two brethren on the way to Emmaus, and they said, "Did not our heart burn within us?" (Luke 24:32). And Paul declared that "after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once" (1 Corinthians 15:6). Then Paul adds that "last of all he was seen of me" (v. 8).

All of this and more is found in the New Testament. It has served as the foundation of the faith of uncounted millions across the world into whose hearts there has come the witness of the Holy Spirit that it is true. They have lived by this testimony, and they have died by it. When the dark shadow of death has crossed their paths, when hope normally would have fled, there has come the reassurance that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). In such hours of darkness there has shown forth a light, steady and certain, to sustain and comfort and bless.

Book of Mormon witnesses

But if that is not enough, there is another testament. This so-called Book

of Mormon, this scripture of the New World, is before us as an added witness of the divinity and reality of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the encompassing beneficence of His atonement, and of His coming forth from the darkness of the grave. Within these covers is found much of the sure word of prophecy concerning Him who should be born of a virgin, the Son of the Almighty God. There is a foretelling of His work among men as a living mortal. There is a declaration of His death, of the lamb without blemish who was to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. And there is an account that is moving and inspiring and true of the visit of the resurrected Christ among living men and women in the western continent. The testimony is here to handle; it is here to be read; it is here to be pondered; it is here to be prayed over with a promise that he who prays shall know by the power of the Holy Ghost of its truth and validity (see Moroni 10:3-5).

Joseph Smith's witness

And again, if this is not enough, there is the testimony of a prophet, whose name was Joseph, who sealed with his blood the testimony of his Lord. Today we celebrate the anniversary of Easter. This year we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith. On the sultry afternoon of 27 June 1844, he and his brother Hyrum were killed by an armed mob, the members of which had painted their faces black to hide their identity. John Taylor, who was with them on that occasion and who was wounded, later wrote this appraisal:

"Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. . . . He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission

and his works with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. . . . Their innocent blood . . . is a witness to the truth of the everlasting gospel that all the world cannot impeach" (D&C 135:3, 7).

Joseph Smith and Governor Ford

Because this is the sesquicentennial year of that tragic event, I wish to say a few words about the leading character on each side of that equation at Carthage. On the one side was Joseph the prophet-martyr; on the other, Thomas Ford, governor of Illinois, whose broken pledge culminated in the tragedies of that day.

Joseph Smith and Thomas Ford were contemporaries. Governor Ford was born in Pennsylvania in 1800. Joseph Smith was born in Vermont in 1805. The governor was five years the Prophet's senior. My information concerning the Prophet comes from sources with which all of you are familiar. That which I have concerning the governor comes from his own writings and for the most part from a historical introduction to those writings written by M. M. Quaife, as well as an introduction by General James Shields to the first edition of Ford's *History of Illinois*. I am indebted to Mrs. Doris M. Davis of Peoria for research help. I give these details so that you may know that what I say comes from sources that may be regarded as reliable.

Joseph Smith died at the age of thirty-eight in 1844. He would have been thirty-nine the following December.

Governor Ford died in 1850, a month prior to his fiftieth birthday. He completed his term as governor in 1846, and moved to the farm of his wife's parents, where he wrote his *History of Illinois*.

In this history, he gives a rather detailed account of the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. He concludes with this summary statement:

"Thus fell Joe Smith, the most successful impostor in modern times; a man who, though ignorant and coarse, had

some great natural parts which fitted him for temporary success, but which were so obscured and counteracted by the inherent corruption and vices of his nature that he never could succeed in establishing a system of policy which looked to permanent success in the future" (*A History of Illinois*, ed. Milo Milton Quaife, 2 vols. [Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1945-46], 2:213).

Such the appraisal of Joseph Smith by Thomas Ford.

Demise of Governor Ford and family

I wish not to be critical of Governor Ford. I feel sorry for him. I regard him as one who sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind.

In April of 1847, when our people began the long westward march from Winter Quarters on the Missouri to the valley of the Great Salt Lake, Governor Ford and his family moved to Peoria with the intent that he would there practice law. I now quote from Mr. Quaife:

"The story of his three-years' sojourn there is one of unrelieved poverty and defeat. Mrs. Ford, afflicted with cancer, died October 12, 1850 at the early age of thirty-eight. Three weeks later, on November 3, he followed her to the grave. Left behind were five orphaned children, penniless and of tender years, to face the world as best they might. To the credit of common humanity, all were taken in charge by considerate townsmen and reared in homes which were better than their own father could provide. In his closing weeks he had been an object of charity, and his funeral expenses were met by the gifts of a group of citizens" (*A History of Illinois*, 1:xxvi-xxvii).

Both he and his wife were buried in the Peoria City Cemetery. Their remains were later moved to the Springdale Cemetery, where the grave remained unmarked until 1896, when the legislature provided an appropriation of \$1,200 for

the monument that now marks the site of his burial.

I have stood before that monument and pondered the events and circumstances of which I speak.

After the governor's death and after his debts were paid, there remained the sum of \$148.06 for distribution among his five children as their inheritance.

In his introduction to Ford's *History*, General James Shields relates: "In 1850 while the author of this work was on his death-bed, he placed in my hands a manuscript, with the contents of which I was then wholly unacquainted, with the injunction that after his decease I should have it published for the benefit of his family. He soon after departed this life, leaving his orphan children in a destitute condition" (p. xlvii). The royalties from the sale of the book yielded \$750, making it possible for each of his five children to receive \$150 as their meager financial inheritance beyond the \$29.61 left each by their father.

The eldest daughter married; her husband died in 1878; she lived until 1910, the last few years cared for by others. The second daughter married, reared a family, and died in St. Louis. The younger daughter, born in 1841, died at the age of 21 of "consumption," and was buried with her parents. Concerning the two sons, I quote again from Mr. Quaife:

"In the autumn of 1872 Thomas [the youngest son] was hung as a horse thief near Caldwell, Kansas, by a lynching party. Two years later, in 1874, Seuel [his brother] and two other outlaws were hung from the same branch of a tree near Wellington, Kansas, by another lynching party" (*A History of Illinois*, 1:xxxii). They were buried in unmarked graves on the Kansas prairie.

I mention these things to say that there was tragedy on both sides of the Carthage problem. Joseph and Hyrum were murdered. Governor Thomas Ford, who had pledged the protection of the

state of Illinois, and failed to provide it, fell upon tragic and sorrowful circumstances, dying in abject poverty and leaving a destitute family who for the most part also lived with disappointment and died with much of misery.

Joseph's work lives on

While Governor Ford wrote his dismal appraisal of Joseph Smith, another contemporary, Parley P. Pratt, wrote one of his own. Speaking of Joseph Smith at that time, he said:

"His works will live to endless ages, and unnumbered millions yet unborn will mention his name with honor, as a noble instrument in the hands of God, who, during his short and youthful career, laid the foundation of that kingdom spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, which should break in pieces all other kingdoms and stand forever" (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975], p. 46).

Parley Pratt wrote with a surer sense of prophecy than did Tom Ford. He wrote out of a spirit of love, yes, but also with something of a vision of this great millennial movement.

The shadow of the events of June 1844 has now lengthened over a century and a half. That shadow has reached across a substantial part of the world. The history is clear, and it is wonderful to survey. It is a poignant and tremendous story, an epic without parallel. Two years after the martyrdom, while the governor was writing his history, most of our people left Nauvoo, their beloved city on the Mississippi. They left behind their beautiful and comfortable homes. They left their magnificent temple. Their exodus began in February of 1846 in the cold of winter, so cold that the Mississippi froze and some were able to cross on the ice. They did not leave out of a desire to go. They had to leave, driven by the bitter and unrelenting hatred of vicious mobs.

They threaded their way across the Iowa prairie to the Missouri River at Council Bluffs, then named Kaneshville. On the west side of the river they established their Winter Quarters. The next spring they moved up the Elkhorn River and along the Platte, across what is now Nebraska and Wyoming, and on to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Death marched beside them. Some six thousand were buried along that trail before completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. Here in the valleys of the mountains they grubbed sagebrush, they fought crickets, they brought water from the canyon streams to make the desert blossom.

Praise to the man

From that time until this, the work has spread over the earth until today congregations in more than 165 different tongues and more than 140 nations sing of Joseph Smith the tribute given by W. W. Phelps:

Praise to the man who communed
with Jehovah!

Jesus anointed that Prophet and
Seer.

Blessed to open the last dispensa-
tion,

Kings shall extol him, and nations
revere.

[“Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27]

[The following text includes a segment prepared for delivery but deleted due to time constraints.]

Growth and reconciliation

Church membership is now approaching nine million. Last year alone, more than 4.5 million copies of the Book of Mormon were printed and distributed as “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.” Thousands of meetinghouses, with more than 21,000 congregations, and scores of beautiful temples carry

the name of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Governor Ford could not see the virtues of this man whose blood stained the floor of the little jail in Carthage. But an angel from heaven years earlier had spoken the destiny of the boy Joseph. Said Moroni: “Your name shall be known among the nations, for the work which the Lord will perform by your hands shall cause the righteous to rejoice and the wicked to rage: with the one it shall be had in honor, and with the other in reproach; yet, with these it shall be a terror because of the great and marvelous work which shall follow the coming forth of this fulness of my gospel” (in Oliver Cowdery, “Rise of the Church,” *Times and Seasons*, 1 May 1841, pp. 394–95).

One hundred and fifty years have now passed. We are grateful for the reconciliation which has come. We thank God our Eternal Father for a more tolerant day and greater understanding. Gone are the days of burnings and forced marches. The sunshine of goodwill is upon our people. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints now owns the scene of the martyrdom, the Carthage Jail with the block on which it stands. It has been made beautiful and attractive for the tens of thousands who visit from many nations. Nauvoo is a place of goodwill, a remnant of a remarkable history. The site of the once-beautiful temple has become a scene of reverent curiosity. Today there is a stake of Zion which carries the name Nauvoo. And north of Chicago is a magnificently beautiful temple in which are administered ordinances of salvation to benefit the sons and daughters of God of all generations, a work which has come through the priesthood revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, a work which extends to the generations of the past the wondrous opportunities afforded by the atonement of the Savior of mankind.

The ends of the earth shall inquire

On another occasion Joseph had been incarcerated in another jail, that in Liberty, Missouri. In the misery of that foul place he cried out, "O God, where art thou?" (D&C 121:1).

In answer to that prayer came this remarkable promise:

"The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee;

"While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand.

"And thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors" (D&C 122:1-3).

You and I are witnesses to the fulfillment of these remarkable and prophetic words. As I speak today I am heard in thousands of halls across this and other nations. This is but a small token of the fulfillment of that promise. And what we see today, I am certain, is but a foreshadowing of what the future holds.

Joseph Smith's testimony of the Savior

Joseph Smith lived as an instrument in the hands of the Lord for the establishment of His restored work in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. He died in testimony of the Savior of mankind. The Church which was established through him carries the name of the Redeemer of the world. Out of a vision wondrous and beautiful, experienced in the prime and vigor of his life, the Prophet Joseph wrote these words, which confirm the truth of that first Easter morning and the glory of Him from whom he drew all of his inspiration

as the Prophet of this great latter-day dispensation. Said he:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:22-24).

Our personal testimony

And so, on this Easter Sabbath, we bear testimony of the Redeemer of the world, He who was born the Only Begotten of the Father, He who went about doing good in the exercise of His divine power, He who died on Calvary's hill, and He who rose to become the first-fruits of the Resurrection. We testify to the truth of the words of the Apostles and other witnesses of old. We further confirm the truth of the testimony of the great seer and revelator of this dispensation, the Prophet Joseph Smith, who 150 years ago gave his life as a witness of the Risen Redeemer. And by the power of the Holy Ghost, we give our personal testimony that He who was slain on Calvary's hill rose from the dead, our Savior, whose sacrifice made possible the gift of eternal life to all who will keep His commandments. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, amen.

The choir sang "The Lord Be with Us."

Elder Augusto A. Lim offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 164th Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 3, 1994. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 164th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ezra Taft Benson is watching this session in his apartment, and Clinton Cutler is excused, being ill.

We note that Elders M. Russell Ballard, Ted E. Brewerton, and David E. Sorensen are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; and Elders J. Richard Clarke and Dennis B. Neuenschwander are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. We also send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere, who are par-

ticipating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, accompanied by John Longhurst, will provide the music for this session. The choir will begin this service by singing "Come, All Whose Souls Are Lighted." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Monte J. Brough, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Come, All Whose Souls Are Lighted."

Elder Monte J. Brough offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Brother Brough.

The choir will now sing "With All the Power of Heart and Tongue." Elder David B. Haight of the Council of Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "With All the Power of Heart and Tongue."

Elder David B. Haight

Longings that lead us to Jesus

I pray for a portion of your faith and prayers as I bear witness of Christ. In the hearts of all mankind, of whatever race or station in life, there are inexpressible longings for something they do not now possess. This longing is implanted by a concerned Creator.

A loving Heavenly Father's design is that this longing of the human heart should lead to the One who alone can

satisfy it—even Jesus of Nazareth, who was foreordained in the Grand Council before the earth was created.

To the brother of Jared, the premortal Jesus said:

"Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. . . . In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name" (Ether 3:14).

Expand our understanding of Christ

Today is Easter—a day designated to solemnize the bodily resurrection of the Savior of the world. As members of His restored church, it is imperative that we do our utmost to expand our understanding of His premortal commission, His earthly ministry, His unjust crucifixion, the agony of His suffering, His final sacrifice, and His resurrection. Each of us is profoundly indebted to Him, for we were purchased by the shedding of His own precious blood. We are surely obligated to follow His admonition, to believe on His name, and to testify of Him and His word.

I am indebted for some of my remarks to eyewitness accounts of Christ's life as recorded in the New Testament; to prophets—ancient and modern—especially to the Prophet Joseph Smith for his personal witness that God the Father and His Son live and for his faithfully following divine instructions in bringing forth the fulness of the everlasting gospel as contained in the Book of Mormon and other latter-day scriptures; also to the apostolic writings of Elders James E. Talmage and Bruce R. McConkie; and to others, including theologian and believer Frederic Farrar. Our scriptures teach us gospel truths, and inspired writers add to our understanding.

Washing the disciples' feet

We have learned that during the last days of His mortal life, Jesus had withdrawn from all public teaching and had spent the Wednesday before Passover in Bethany in seclusion. The next day, Thursday, Jesus instructed Peter and John to go to Jerusalem, where they would find a room prepared so they could meet together. In that room Jesus met with the Twelve, and they sat down to eat.

It was custom that as a person entered a room, he laid aside his sandals at the door and his feet were washed to

remove the dust from his travels. A servant usually performed this lowly task, but on this sacred night, "Jesus Himself, in His eternal humility and self-denial, rose from His place at the meal to do [this] menial service" (Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* [Portland, Oreg.: Fountain Publications, 1964], p. 557).

Jesus said to them:

"Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:13–14).

"He their Lord and Master had washed their feet. It was a kind and gracious task, and such ought to be the nature of all their dealings with each other. He had done it to teach them humility, . . . self-denial, [and] love" (*Life of Christ*, p. 559).

During the course of the meal, He revealed the terrible news that one among them would betray Him, and a deep sadness fell over all of them.

Jesus spoke to Judas, "That [which] thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27). And Judas left the room to do his awful deed.

Teaching the chosen eleven

Conscious of the impending events, Jesus opened His heart to His chosen eleven, saying:

"Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. . . .

"Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: [but] whither I go, ye cannot come. . . .

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:31, 33–35).

While in that upper room, Jesus—initiating the sacrament—took bread, brake it, prayed over it, and passed it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body

which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).

And then, passing the cup, He said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (v. 20).

The Savior prayed to the Father for the Apostles and all believers, saying:

"Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:1-3).

The time which remained for Him to be with them was short. He told them of the Holy Ghost, whom He would send to comfort and guide them in truth. He taught them many things that night in the upper room as He tried to prepare them for that which He knew was coming.

Anguish in Gethsemane

They rose from the table, united their voices in a hymn, and left the room together to walk to the Garden of Gethsemane and all that awaited them there.

"The awful hour of His deepest [suffering] had arrived. . . . Nothing remained . . . but the torture of physical pain and . . . mental anguish. . . . He . . . calm[ed] His spirit by prayer and solitude to meet that hour in which all that is evil in the Power of [Satan] should wreak its worst upon the Innocent and Holy [One]. And He must face that hour alone" (*Life of Christ*, p. 575).

"My soul," He said, "'is full of anguish, even unto death'" (*Life of Christ*, p. 576). It was not the anguish and fear of pain and death but "the burden . . . of the world's sin which lay heavy on His heart" (p. 579).

"He withdrew to find His only consolation in communing with [His Fa-

ther]. And there He found all that He needed. Before that hour was over He was prepared for the worst that Satan or man could do" (p. 580).

"From the terrible conflict in Gethsemane, Christ emerged a victor. Though in the dark tribulation of that . . . hour He had pleaded that the bitter cup be removed from His lips, . . . the Father's will was never lost sight of" (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1916], p. 614).

Betrayal, trials, and scourging

And then came Judas with his betraying kiss; Christ's surrender to His enemies; the arrest of the Son of God and three sham trials before the priests in the Sanhedrin; the insults and the derision of the multitudes; Christ's appearance before Pontius Pilate, then Herod, then again before Pilate. Then came the final pronouncement of Pilate. After three appeals to the multitude of Jews to spare one of their own fell upon deaf ears, he delivered Jesus to be scourged.

"Scourging was the ordinary preliminary to crucifixion. . . . The . . . sufferer was publicly stripped, . . . tied . . . to a pillar, and then . . . blows were inflicted with leathern thongs, weighted with jagged . . . bone [or rock]. The victim generally fainted, [or] often died" (*Life of Christ*, p. 624).

The Crucifixion

When the cross had been prepared, they placed it upon His shoulders and led Him to Golgotha. "But Jesus was enfeebled . . . by [hours] of violent . . . agitation, . . . by an evening of deep . . . emotion, . . . by the mental [anguish] of the garden, [and] by [the] three trials and three sentences of death before the Jews. . . . All [of] these, [added] to the [wounds] of the scourging [and loss of blood], had utterly broken . . . His physi-

cal strength" (*Life of Christ*, pp. 634–35). So a bystander was enlisted to carry the heavy cross.

At Calvary, Christ was laid down upon the cross. "His arms were stretched along the cross-beams; and at the centre of the open palms, the point of a huge iron nail was placed [and driven through the quivering flesh] into the wood" (*Life of Christ*, p. 639). His feet were also nailed to the cross, which was slowly raised and fixed firmly in the ground. "All the voices about Him rang with blasphemy and spite, and in that long slow agony His dying ear caught no [words] of gratitude, of pity, or of love" (p. 644). Every movement would be agony to the fresh wounds in the hands and the feet. "Dizziness, . . . thirst, . . . sleeplessness, . . . fever, . . . long [hours] of torment. . . . Such was the death to which Christ was doomed" (p. 641).

Jesus was nailed to the cross on that fateful Friday morning, probably between nine and ten o'clock. "At noontide the light of the sun was obscured, and black darkness spread over the whole land. The terrifying gloom continued for a period of three hours. . . . It was a fitting sign of the earth's deep mourning over the impending death of her Creator" (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 660).

At the ninth hour Christ uttered that anguished cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). "In that bitterest hour the dying Christ was alone. [So] that the supreme sacrifice of the Son might be consummated in all its fulness, the Father seems to have withdrawn . . . His immediate Presence, leaving to the Savior of men the glory of complete victory over the forces of sin and death" (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 661).

"It is finished"

Later, "realizing that He was no longer forsaken, but that His atoning sacrifice had been accepted by the Father, and that His mission in the flesh had

been carried to glorious consummation, He exclaimed in a loud voice of holy triumph: 'It is finished.' In reverence, resignation, and relief, He addressed the Father saying: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' He bowed His head, and voluntarily gave up His life" (*Jesus the Christ*, pp. 661–62).

"At that moment the vail of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. An earthquake shook the earth. . . . The multitude, [now] utterly sobered . . . , returned to Jerusalem" (*Life of Christ*, pp. 651–52).

Christ's body was lovingly taken from the cross, placed on fine linen purchased by Joseph of Arimathea, covered with rich spices, and carried to a nearby garden where a new tomb belonging to Joseph was located.

It was now late in the afternoon, and "the preparations had to be hurried, because when the sun had set the Sabbath would have begun. All that they could do, therefore, was to wash [and lay the precious body] amid the spices, to wrap the head in a white napkin, to roll the fine linen round . . . the wounded limbs, and to lay the body reverently in the rocky niche" (*Life of Christ*, p. 659). Then a great stone was rolled across the opening of the tomb.

The empty tomb

On the dawn of that first-ever Easter morn, the two Marys, along with other women, carried their precious spices and ointments to the tomb to finish preparing the body. They wondered who would help them remove the stone from the opening of the sepulchre. To their amazement, they found the heavy stone already rolled away, the body of Jesus gone, and two angels in white bearing witness that Christ had risen from the dead. The two women hurried to the disciples with their news. John and Peter rushed to the tomb to find that it was so. The grave was empty.

Mary of Magdala returned once more to the tomb and there uttered the words, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him" (John 20:13). And then Jesus Himself stood before her and said to her, "Mary" (v. 16). Now that she recognized Him, He gently instructed her, "Touch me not; for I [have] not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (v. 17). And she hastened to obey.

After rising from the tomb on the third day after His crucifixion, Jesus appeared not only to Mary but to the other women also. A third appearance of Jesus was to Peter. On the same day, two of the disciples were on their way to the village named Emmaus when Christ joined with them. Once more, for the fifth time on that memorable Easter day, Jesus manifested Himself to His disciples. Ten of them were gathered together seeking solace when Christ appeared before them.

"Peace be unto you," He said.

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:36, 39).

"Feed my sheep"

Later on, at the seashore at Galilee, while the Savior and the disciples were eating fish together, Jesus asked Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"

"Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

"Feed my lambs."

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" He asked again.

"Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

"Feed my sheep."

A third time: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

In anguish, Peter said, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

And the Savior replied yet again, "Feed my sheep" (see John 21:15-17).

As the place of His ascension, Jesus chose the Mount of Olives. Here on the Mount the Savior instructed the Apostles and those whom He had commissioned:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20).

This is our mandate. This is why we go to all nations of the earth proclaiming His gospel.

How great the wisdom and the love

Eliza R. Snow, who loved this work—as do I—wrote these precious lines:

How great the wisdom and the love
That filled the courts on high
And sent the Savior from above
To suffer, bleed, and die!

His precious blood he freely spilt;
His life he freely gave,
A sinless sacrifice for guilt,
A dying world to save. . . .

How great, how glorious, how complete,
Redemption's grand design,
Where justice, love, and mercy meet
In harmony divine!
["How Great the Wisdom and the Love," *Hymns*, no. 195]

The prophet Alma taught that the plan of mercy required an atonement to be made by God himself "to appease the demands of justice," that God might be a perfect, just, and merciful God (Alma 42:15). I bear witness that He lives, that He is our Savior. His is the pathway to

true happiness, I declare in His holy name, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Haight, for that touching account of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Robert D. Hales, who was sustained yesterday as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Gerald E. Melchin of the Seventy, who is currently presiding over the Toronto Ontario Temple.

Elder Robert D. Hales

Shaking of the oak tree

It is time for my response. Nineteen years ago, after I was set apart by the Quorum of the Twelve in the temple as an assistant to the Twelve Apostles, Elder LeGrand Richards gave me two pieces of wisdom that have come to me over and over in the past fifty-some-odd hours that I have known of this call. First was, "Oh, to be a boy and have your whole life ahead of you." I was forty-two years of age. I am now sixty-one and am once again a boy. There are men sitting on this stand who have been Apostles and in the First Presidency for half my age.

The second gem of wisdom that Elder LeGrand Richards gave me was that each time a new assignment in the Church came to him, it was like the shaking of an oak tree: when the tree shook, an acorn would fall and be planted, allowing him a new beginning in that assignment. "You know, my life has been like a great oak tree. From a tiny acorn I would grow a great oak tree." Then he said, "I did it in business, and the oak tree shook. An acorn came down, and they sent me out as a mission president. Then I grew another oak tree; they sent me out a second time as a mission president, and then a third." Then he talked of being a Presiding Bishop. And each time the oak tree would shake, an acorn would be planted.

At this time, I understand the oak tree has shaken. An acorn has been planted; it is a new beginning.

Expressions of gratitude

I express gratitude, my brothers and sisters, for the strength which comes through your faith and prayers. I am in need of your prayers at this time of my calling. To be an Apostle of the Lord, I am finding, is a process—a process of repentance and humility, to look inward as we've been instructed and ask for forgiveness and strength to be what I should be. Unfortunately, I am not a perfect man, and infallibility does not come with the call. Therefore, I must ask for forgiveness from Heavenly Father for those things which I have done which are less than perfect and ask forgiveness of anyone I might have offended knowingly or unknowingly because of my personality or style.

The strength which will come through your prayers will be invaluable to what I need to do to forge the spiritual strength required to have my voice and my testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ penetrate the hearts of those who will hear.

I express my appreciation to my parents, my dear brother who has passed away, and my sister for their loving example. I am grateful for the many teachers, and the priesthood leaders who work week after week, teaching us as youth to love the Lord. I wish, also, to express appreciation and my deep love for my wife, children, and grandchildren. I have been privileged to work among the finest Brethren that this earth can have in the Quorum of the Seventy—working

together and forging our testimonies to further the Lord's work.

Service as Presiding Bishop

In the closing of this chapter of my stewardship as the Presiding Bishop, I wish to welcome and sustain Bishop Bateman as the new Presiding Bishop of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and let him know of the marvelous experiences that he will have in his calling.

I love the four Counselors who have served with me—Elder Eyring, Elder Pace, Bishop Burton, and Bishop Edgley. They are deeply spiritual and truly devoted men whose love for the Lord has been an example to me. I would also like to express thanks and appreciation to the loyal staff in the Presiding Bishopric's office, both at Church headquarters and around the world. My expression of appreciation would not be complete without communicating my thanks for the faithful talents and labors of the Saints around the world.

We have such faithful members of the Church. I have known of the tithes and offerings and the freewill offerings that have led to welfare and humanitarian efforts. This is a marvelous work and a marvelous Church with magnificent members. All, in their own individual callings, live the gospel and are an example to those of us who travel the world and meet them.

My testimony grew as I grew—nourished and taught by countless others who helped me by their example of living the gospel. I shall be eternally grateful for the many good people who, in serving the Lord, have blessed my life.

I bear witness to what President Hinckley taught last night in priesthood meeting about Church government. Over the past nine years, on a daily basis, I have seen the wisdom of the Lord's plan as it functions under today's circumstances.

Special witness of Jesus Christ

But that closes the chapter. The oak tree is shaken. The acorn is planted, and this is Easter—commemoration of the Savior coming forth after three days as the resurrected, risen Lord. For the rest of my sojourn here in mortality, I will have the opportunity to bear testimony as a special witness of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is a God; he is Jehovah of the Old Testament (see Abraham 2:7–8); he is the Savior of the New Testament.

Jesus' premortal work

Jesus Christ dwelt in the heavens with his Father (see John 1:1–5), and we dwelt with them as spirit children of God the Father.

Jesus Christ presented his Father's eternal plan, that plan of which we are all part. We come to this earth to undergo testing for a probationary period and to have opposition in all things. Through the eternal principle of agency, we are free to choose liberty and eternal life and return with honor to God's presence if we live righteous lives; or to choose captivity and spiritual death (see Moses 4:1–4).

Jesus Christ is the creator of all things on earth, under the direction of his Father (see Moses 1:33; Ephesians 3:9).

Jesus' mortal ministry

"The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14). Jesus Christ came to this earth, born of Mary, a mortal mother. His Father was Almighty God (see Luke 1:26–35).

Jesus Christ was baptized by immersion by John the Baptist, and the Holy Ghost was manifest in the "Spirit like a dove descending upon him" (Mark 1:10). And his Father spoke, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11).

Jesus Christ organized his church and selected twelve Apostles, and also prophets, sevens, and evangelists (see Ephesians 4:11; Luke 6:13; 10:1).

Jesus Christ's message is unique. He stands between us and his Father; he is the Mediator (see D&C 76:41–43; John 3:17). Through him shall all mankind be saved and by him shall all mankind be saved.

Jesus Christ is the Redeemer, our Savior; only he with a mortal mother and an immortal Father could fulfill the Atonement and die to save all mankind. He did so of his own free will and choice (see Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:34–36; Luke 22:41–42).

Jesus' resurrection and postmortal work

Jesus Christ was resurrected and appeared to many after his resurrection (see John 20:11–30; Luke 24:13–44). He taught us the physical characteristics of a resurrected being and told us that we could follow his example and that we would be able to progress and be like him.

Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven before the eyes of his disciples was accompanied by the promise that in like manner he would come again (see Acts 1:9–11; Mark 16:19–20; Luke 24:51–53). The second coming of Jesus Christ is nigh at hand, as the signs of the Second Coming are being fulfilled this very day.

Jesus Christ appeared with his Father and restored the same organization

he established during his ministry through Joseph Smith the Prophet in these latter days. In addition to the Bible, the Book of Mormon was revealed to the world as another witness to testify of his divine calling and ministry.

Jesus Christ leads and guides his church today through revelation to a prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, and his Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles—the same organization he established when he was here on earth (see D&C 102:9, 23; Articles of Faith 1:6).

Follow thou me

Jesus Christ's admonition to “come . . . follow me” and “follow thou me” is the challenge that he gave to each of us (see Matthew 19:21; John 21:22). He lived in the preexistence in the spirit world; he dwelt and we dwelt with God the Father. He is the Son, Jesus Christ.

We took a mortal body upon us. We will have opposition; we will taste death and be resurrected because of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

May I close my testimony in the same words as the prophet Mormon did shortly after recounting the birth of the Savior:

“Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life” (3 Nephi 5:13).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Gerald E. Melchin

Decisions

I'm grateful to be here with you in general conference today, and I'd like to add my appreciation and support to these Brethren who have just been called, to Bishop Hales and the others.

The past few months have been a spiritual highlight for Sister Melchin and me while serving in the Toronto temple. We've been blessed with two great counselors, along with their companions, and dedicated ordinance workers, some serving as full-time missionaries. The area is

multicultural, and members from many nations and tongues share with us their inner feelings as they receive their endowments.

I often think about the circumstances and the many decisions that have brought us together in this holy house. I have never counted the number of decisions that I make each day, but I am aware that they are one continual process. The dictionary says that a decision is arriving "at a solution that ends uncertainty" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed.). It is the uncertainty that makes decisions so difficult. When decisions are made in haste or without contemplating the end result, we may find ourselves wishing we could turn the clock back.

Freedom to act for ourselves

Some time ago I was watching the opera called *The Sorcerer*. The story tells of a prince and princess who were concerned at the number not married in their kingdom. (Sounds familiar.) They asked a sorcerer to prepare a potion that would put people to sleep, and upon awakening they would fall in love with the first person they saw. All who were single were invited to a banquet where the potion was served. The potion worked, but needless to say there were some pretty unequal partnerships formed. The prince and princess were alarmed at the results and realized that this was not the answer. Father Lehi gave the solution when he said: "Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other" (2 Nephi 2:16). And this is the freedom the Lord wanted preserved for us.

Joseph Smith's decision

One of the most important decisions made in this dispensation was that of the

boy Joseph Smith. A nephew of mine painted a picture and later reproduced it as a mural in the Logan, Utah, institute building. He gave it the title "The Grove Awaits." It pictures a young boy approaching the Sacred Grove. I wonder what Joseph thought awaited him that beautiful spring morning. His decision to come to the grove was based on his desire to know the truth, on his faith and obedience to the counsel of the Lord. Joseph's experience in the grove was of greater import than he could have imagined and one that has affected the lives of all of us. The principles he followed in going to the grove should be the basis for all the decisions we all face.

Christ's decision

There is Another who approached a grove some hundreds of years prior to the days of Joseph. Though He had spoken beforehand of the offering He was to make, He may not have fully comprehended the severity of the experience that awaited Him. He made His way, knowing He had power over life and death and could command angels to come to His assistance. He speaks of being "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38), and described the experience as causing Him "to tremble because of pain, . . . to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:18). It was His love and obedience to the Father that made it possible for Him to finally say to Peter, "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matthew 26:54). He completed the mission for which He was foreordained and opened the door of salvation and eternal life to all.

Our decisions

We approached a grove of uncertainty as we awaited our call to this earth. It must have been an anxious and

rather frightening experience as we left our loved ones to part the veil. When Spartacus was asked by one of his followers if he was afraid to die, he said, "No more than I was to be born." That our premortal existence was also a testing period where we were free to choose is confirmed by our prophets. Alma suggests that it was our exceeding faith and good works that earned us the right of priesthood (see Alma 13:3).

There is a grove that awaits all of us. It's referred to as death. Though it is not optional and must be accepted, our decisions here lay the foundation for what awaits us there. Like the Savior, we realize that this experience must come but do not fully understand what lies ahead. One would naturally think that everyone would seek as much information as possible to prepare for the inevitable. However, some are lulled into a sense of security, not giving heed to the Lord's warning that "without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh" (D&C 84:21). There is a change that must come upon us through sanctification that only obedience to the laws and compliance to the ordinances can bring.

Purposes of temple work

The reason the Lord commanded Moses to construct a "tabernacle . . . in the wilderness" and a "house in the land of promise" was to reveal ordinances "which had been hid from before the world was" (D&C 124:38). Joseph was told to build a house to His name so that ordinances that were lost or taken away could be restored. If we will reason upon the many scriptures we have at our disposal, we must come to the conclusion that the full blessings of the Lord are found within the walls of the temple. It is there that we prepare to enter the most important of all groves, wherein the promise of eternal companionship

and families forever is finally realized, where "all that my Father hath shall be given . . . him" (D&C 84:38). Though we cannot comprehend the significance of those blessings, the decisions must be made today.

The doors of the temple open to us many experiences. Increasing numbers of family files that our computers help us to compile will soon become a large portion of the work taking place in our temples. They will lead us into involvement in other ordinances where we will have unexpected experiences. If we include our family, friends, or ward members and come as a group to do the work for our ancestry, we will be able to share together a very spiritual and precious few moments. I have seen the impact on converts who come for the first time with friends, bringing a family group sheet and completing the work in the sealing room.

We can also be called as ordinance workers for ward and stake excursions, providing involvement that adds greater appreciation of the temple. From Doctrine and Covenants section 109 we read, "And . . . all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord's house may feel thy power, and feel constrained to acknowledge that thou hast sanctified it, and that it is thy house, a place of thy holiness" (v. 13).

The Lord will help us make decisions

The Lord's willingness to assist in our decisions will be based on the same principles that led the Prophet to the grove and the Savior to the garden. There are times when we wish that life could be a guided tour where we have no responsibility for details or for our safe arrival. I recently saw a gadget in a store called "an executive decision maker." You pressed a button, and a flashing light pointed to the answer, such as "Definitely," "Never," or "Why Not?" Can we afford to leave our future to chance when

the Lord encourages us to ask, seek, and knock? (see Matthew 7:7).

Unfortunately many vital decisions are made when we are most inexperienced. Our desire for freedom can be dangerous if we have not followed the proper guidelines. The book *Mythology*, by Edith Hamilton, tells of a boy named Icarus and his father. Imprisoned on the isle of Crete, they made a pair of wings composed of feathers held together by wax. They hoped that they could use them to fly to their freedom, and the boy was given the chance to try them out. His father warned him not to fly too close to the sun lest the wax melt. But Icarus became exhilarated with his newfound freedom and flew too high. The wax melted, and the wings fell apart, and the boy fell to his death. Our future can be imperiled by freedom left uncontrolled (New York: New American Library, 1969, pp. 139–40).

Seek a testimony and build faith

Our foremost decision must be to seek a testimony of the gospel and to build our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a loving and concerned parent, as we see in these words from Doctrine and Covenants 67:1: “Ye elders of my church, who have assembled yourselves together, whose prayers I have heard,

and whose hearts I know, and whose desires have come up before me.” He will not leave us alone in our decisions, for He promised, “I will not leave you comfortless” (John 14:18). It is this Comforter, who is the spirit of revelation, that confirms all truths unto us.

I am grateful for the privilege to serve the Lord and for the spirit which has touched my heart and soul and for my wonderful companion and my faithful family. And I leave my witness with you and with them of the divinity of this work and of our Lord Jesus Christ, who leads and directs and presides over it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Robert D. Hales, a new member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and Elder Gerald E. Melchin of the Seventy and president of the Toronto Ontario Temple.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Sweet Is the Work, My God, My King.” Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang
“Sweet Is the Work.”

Elder F. Melvin Hammond

Trying to be like Jesus

The work is sweet. Just a few days ago in faraway Mexico, Sister Hammond and I picked up the telephone and heard the voice of a little child begin to sing, perfectly on key and angelic to our ears, “I’m trying to be like Jesus,” and sweetly continue:

Love one another as Jesus loves you.
Try to show kindness in all that you do.

Be gentle and loving in deed and in thought,

For these are the things Jesus taught.
[“I’m Trying to Be like Jesus,” *Children’s Songbook*, p. 78]

To that precious grandchild, one of many, and to everyone else who is trying to be like Jesus, we congratulate you and express our deepest affection for you. Today I desire to bring us nearer to Jesus. I would like us to love Him

more than we do now. Will you listen as I tell you about Jesus Christ and His infinite love?

The premortal Christ

It was Christ who in the premortal state presented Himself to become the Savior of men, saying, "Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first" (Abraham 3:27). From that time forth it was proclaimed that the Son of Man would come to earth to sacrifice Himself as an atonement for the sins of all men (see Mosiah 3).

Christ's birth

As the day of His mortal birth approached, Nephi heard the voice saying, "Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, . . . on the morrow come I into the world" (3 Nephi 1:13).

Thus, on the next day in Bethlehem of Judea, a tiny babe lay in a manger while an attentive mother gloried in the presence of her newborn son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, a God come to earth.

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40).

Christ's mortal ministry

In succeeding years "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). At the age of thirty He began His ministry, teaching the great plan of happiness—faith, repentance, baptism by immersion, the laying on of hands to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end (see 3 Nephi 27).

Being obedient to the commandment, He was baptized by immersion in the River Jordan by John the Baptist (see Matthew 3).

Later twelve men were called and ordained as His Apostles. Some of them were humble fishermen. He invited them to come "follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Immediately they left their nets and followed Him, as all who are called should willingly do.

The fame of His glory and power spread throughout the land. To a father who mourned the death of his dear, young daughter, He said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth" (Luke 8:52), and He took her by the hand and she rose from the dead.

To a poor cripple He spoke, "Take up thy bed, and walk" (John 5:8). And miraculously it was done!

He rebuked all sinners. The guilty plotted to take His life. He reminded the Twelve of the awful fate that awaited Him: "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified" (Matthew 26:2).

On that eventful last night in the upper room, He knelt meekly and humbly before each Apostle and tenderly washed their feet (see John 13:3–17).

He instituted the sacred ordinance of the sacrament. Blessing bread and wine, He gave it to each one and commanded them to eat and drink in remembrance of His body and His blood, which was shed for them (see Matthew 26:26–28).

After Judas, the betrayer, had gone out into the night, the Savior instructed the remaining eleven with these familiar words, saying:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34–35).

Christ's atonement and crucifixion

Then Jesus went to the Mount of Olives and the quiet, lovely Garden of

Gethsemane. There He knelt down and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). The law demanded a perfect Lamb for the atoning sacrifice. He alone could qualify. His love for us was so great, so intense that voluntarily He suffered both body and spirit until blood came from every pore to pay the price of sin (see Mosiah 3:7). Somehow we must try to understand and internalize the ransom that He actually paid for each one of us.

Betrayed by a traitor's kiss, condemned to die at foreign hands for a crime He did not commit, He humbly submitted Himself to the ugly lash and was nailed by His hands and feet to a wooden cross. Yea, the greatest of all of God's children was left to die on a horrible cross. When finally all things were accomplished, He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30) and "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Jesus Christ was dead. The spirit had fled. The body was placed in a borrowed tomb.

Christ's resurrection

And then, on the third day, in mighty power He arose, the bonds of death to break. The spirit had returned to reclaim the flesh. His victory over death was complete!

For forty days He tarried on the earth, showing Himself to many and instructing them in "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Finally, from Bethany He rose from their midst and ascended into heaven (see Luke 24:50-51).

Apostasy and Restoration

The faithful Apostles continued vigorously with their ministry. But with their passing came a rapid decline of spirituality. The sacred ordinances were

changed, priesthood authority was lost, and spiritual darkness enveloped the earth. Mankind had ceased to know God.

Then in the spring of 1820, to a fourteen-year-old boy, Joseph Smith Jr., the voice of God the Father pierced through the blackness: "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). Pure light emerged, and darkness fled. God had spoken to man again.

Once again the fulness of the gospel, as found in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and other sacred scriptures, is flooding the earth. The holy priesthood has been restored to man. The sacred ordinances are being administered to every worthy soul who will receive them—all this to prepare the world for the glorious Second Coming proclaimed by the Savior Himself (see D&C 29:11).

Humbly I testify to you that He will come again in glory, and on that day He will manifest Himself to mankind, saying: "I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God" (D&C 45:52). Then He will reign forever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Do we love Christ?

Now, during these last few minutes we have focused on Christ's love. Did we feel His Spirit burn within us? Have we felt a greater love for Him? Are we really trying to be like Jesus? If so, may I ask each one of us to think of the following questions as they relate to our love for Him.

First, do we love Jesus Christ enough to follow His chosen prophets and Apostles, giving heed to their counsel and guidance as if it came from His own mouth? (see D&C 1:38).

Second, do we love the Savior enough to forsake our lovely home, our precious family, and accept a call to proclaim His gospel in any part of the world?

Third, do we love Christ sufficiently that we will be true to our mates, casting out all our unclean thoughts and never betraying their sweet love for us?

Can we do too much for the Lord? Certainly we all love Him. Therefore, I implore us, keep His commandments and become more like Him. Come unto Christ, eat the bread of life, drink the living water, and feast on His limitless love. He is our Savior, our Master, of

whom I bear my humble witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy.

It will now be our pleasure to hear from Sister Ruth B. Wright, second counselor in the general Primary presidency, and she will be followed by Elder Hans B. Ringger of the Seventy.

Sister Ruth B. Wright

Focus on children

Sister Wilson carefully studied each young child as she entered the Primary classroom. *How they have grown and developed since January*, she thought. She gathered them around her and began her lesson. "You are each very special! You have learned so many things. You have learned to sit reverently and listen to our lessons. Why, you can even say your own prayers!"

"Well, of course," responded Clayton, "I've already been on this earth five years!"

Clayton's lifetime seemed a very long time to him, and he saw no limits to what he could learn. Brothers and sisters, our children are eager to learn. They want to be taught. They need to be taught.

The First Presidency has admonished all adult members of the Church to focus on children in an ongoing effort to help them learn to follow the teachings of the Savior. The purpose of "Focus on Children" is to direct the attention and efforts of adult members to care for children in a way that will enable them to have a strong foundation of testimony and faithfully live the gospel of Jesus Christ (see "Focus on Children, Guidelines and Suggestions"). When we consider all the eager young Claytons, we

realize that this is an important and exciting responsibility.

The First Presidency has suggested four goals to help us focus on children. The goals are one, to recognize the worth of our children; two, to activate children who are not participating in the blessings of the gospel; three, to teach children the gospel in such a way that they will understand and live it; and four, to ensure that children are prepared for and given the opportunity for baptism and ordination. I would like to focus my remarks on the third goal, teaching children the gospel in such a way that they will understand and live it.

Teach children to walk uprightly

The Lord, through revelation, has taught us in section 68 of the Doctrine and Covenants that parents have the responsibility to teach and train their children in righteousness. Parents have been instructed to "teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord" (v. 28).

What does it mean to walk uprightly before the Lord? The word *upright* is defined as honest, honorable, straightforward. Thus, to walk uprightly, our children need to choose to live in an honest, honorable, straightforward manner. Children who understand and live

the gospel today can walk with assurance and joy and someday will enter the presence of the Lord, walking uprightly.

Sometimes it isn't easy as parents to teach our children. Sometimes we make mistakes. Our children may react with opposition to what we are teaching them. As parents, we should keep our desire to do our best, constantly show our love, and not blame ourselves if our children choose another way.

In our efforts to help our children desire to walk uprightly before the Lord, we can ask ourselves three questions:

What to teach children?

One: What do we teach our children? It is essential that we teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). I believe the scriptures are the main source to help us teach our children to walk uprightly.

We need to help our children gain a sense of their relationship with Heavenly Father. They can know that each person is a literal child of God, that each is born with a divine birthright and unlimited potential. When my nephew was four years old, his father took great delight in asking him to repeat his name. Rich would ask, "Mark, what is your name?" Mark would stand up tall and answer with a happy grin, "My name is Mark Andrew Broadbent, Child of God." When our children understand that Heavenly Father is real and that He loves and cares about each of them, they will want to walk uprightly.

Our children need to learn how to pray so they can communicate with Heavenly Father. A mother I know has taught her children to pray from the moment they began to utter their first words. Not only did she teach each child to express sincere gratitude for his blessings but also to seek Heavenly Father's guidance by specifically asking Him to "help me choose the right."

Our children need to understand the principle of agency and the significance of the choices they make. I remember a time when I was in high school and wanted to drop out of a type class because it was too hard for me. I hated that class. I begged my parents to sign the form giving their permission for me to drop the class from my schedule. My father explained over and over all the reasons why he thought I should stay in the class. He said, "It's important to stay with something once you begin it, especially when it's hard. You need to work and try to do your best." Finally in desperation he said, "I've told you how I feel, and now, Ruth, the decision is up to you. I'll sign the paper if you want me to." After spending a sleepless night fighting off my desire to do what I wanted, I finally chose to stay in the class. Although I struggled with typing for the rest of the year, I'm glad I stayed, and I'm especially glad for the counsel of my father. He helped me to understand my options. He was clear on how he felt about the matter, but he didn't force me.

Where to teach children?

Question two: Where do we teach our children? The best place to teach our children the gospel is in our homes. A mother of eleven children once said to me, "The gospel needs to be in the air of our homes. Our children should almost be able to feel it. We can provide a safe, comfortable environment for them so they can feel free to learn and to develop their own personal testimonies."

We teach our children everywhere we are with them, and I believe we should have fun with them while we are doing it! We have opportunities many times a day to teach them as we walk together, drive in the car, work side by side, kneel in prayer, talk at the dinner table, and even when we change diapers. It didn't take me long to realize soon after our first child, Natalie, was born that changing diapers was not on my list of favorite

things to do. So to help me survive this recurring ordeal, I sang Primary songs to her to make it nicer for both of us. Soon the routine of changing diapers became second nature and didn't bother me anymore. However, I continued to sing to Natalie and the rest of our children as I performed this duty, because I realized I had an opportunity many times a day to teach my child.

How to teach children?

Question three: How do we teach our children? We teach by example. Our children will learn far more by observing us walk uprightly than any other way. Blair's parents showed him, by their example, the importance of prayer. He remembers many times as a child walking down the hall to his parents' bedroom and seeing them kneeling at the side of their bed, holding hands as they prayed to Heavenly Father.

We teach children to walk uprightly a step at a time, over and over again. I know of a mother who has her children repeat this simple yet powerful statement as they leave home: "The gospel is true, I love you, and I am a child of God, no matter what!" The words "Return with honor" written on a sign hung above the doorway of a home are a constant reminder to all who walk through the door how they should return.

Our children respond best when taught with respect and love. In the eighth chapter of Moroni, the prophet Mormon is deeply concerned about a dissension that has arisen among the members of the Church. He has written a letter giving counsel to his son, Moroni, regarding the matter. But before he addresses this problem, Mormon expresses his devotion to his son:

"My beloved son, Moroni, I rejoice exceedingly that your Lord Jesus Christ hath . . . called you to his ministry, and to his holy work.

"I am mindful of you always in my prayers, continually praying unto God

the Father in the name of his Holy Child, Jesus, that he, through . . . grace, will keep you through the endurance of faith on his name to the end" (vv. 2-3). First, Mormon reaffirmed his love for Moroni, and then he taught him. When our children first know they are loved, they are more likely to listen and be taught.

Clara's advice to her mother

Our children will be more able to survive the challenges that will come to them when they know and understand that keeping God's commandments can bring them peace and joy in their lives and enable them to walk uprightly. While traveling in the car with her mother and younger sister, five-year-old Clara sensed that her mother was deeply troubled about something. "Mommy, what's the matter? You seem so sad."

Not wanting to go into detail about her concerns, but feeling that she needed to acknowledge to her daughter that she was worried, Clara's mother asked, "Clara, what would you do if you felt sad and frustrated?"

"Well," responded Clara, and there was a long pause, "you need to take time out and think. Then you need to pray all the time and read the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. You need to bless other people. Just think about the good things people do for you and the good things in your life, not the bad." Young Clara is beginning to understand how to walk uprightly before the Lord.

To earthly parents God sends children

To guide and teach, protect and love.

Oh, let us keep the sacred trust
That he has placed with each of us
And help to guide them back to
God above.

["How Dear to God Are Little Children," *Children's Songbook*, pp. 180-81]

May God bless us as parents to teach our children to walk uprightly before the

Lord is my prayer in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Hans B. Ringger

"What shall we do?"

A few years ago the world was at a political turning point. People believed that nations would achieve a long-awaited peace. Many overlooked, however, that we live in societies and cultures in which norms and values are changing and where secular reforms often define the nature of men and women. One injustice is often replaced by another injustice. We live in a time of ambiguous mores and of little direction. We are confronted with the same question that the disciples were asked after the resurrection of Christ: "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

This is the question we ask in uncertain times or when confronted with new challenges. We may answer with unreflective action, hoping to find solutions merely through results. Fortunately the Lord understands us better than we understand ourselves. The gospel teaches us first to ponder and develop faith. Only after we have honestly decided in favor of good, based on the gospel, can we bring forth righteous deeds. Active faith leads to good works. We will receive the strength from above to strive toward what is right. However, great works and deeds are not sustained in themselves. Continuity of great deeds requires our obedient dedication and the dedication of future generations.

Gospel satisfies eternal needs

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only plan in which there are no calculated errors. After the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord warned His disciples of future adversities and the need for just works. He explained that they should not rely on their own strength when they

served but on His name and His calling. We too are disciples and live in a world of many needs, be they spiritual, material, or emotional. Through gospel service our eternal needs can be satisfied, and we will be able to serve in the world. Our needs cannot be met through searching for the unenduring but only in discovering the eternal. When we look for answers on an eternal plane, we will secure our relationship to God and gain a better understanding of our fellow beings. We will thus be capable of serving; such is the purpose of life.

The visible expression of doing God's will often results in personal cheerfulness—a silent, sunny brightness and a joy for life, feelings which are sung about in Psalms. We live, however, not without adversity and possible moments of deep despair. Our surroundings entice us to the unenduring, to injustice and disobedience. If we want to prevail, we must act in accordance with gospel principles. We cannot ask for more than to find the true meaning of life. "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39). We are promised that we will receive plentifully and gain eternal life when we give up those things the Lord requires of us.

We choose to accept or reject the gospel of Christ. Human life was created on the basis of freedom of choice. God wants free people and people who serve Him freely. It is therefore a challenge in everyone's life to choose the straight and narrow path which avoids a life which lacks eternal direction. There are probably times in our lives when we wonder if there are other paths or shortcuts. The gospel gives us the answer, together with the promise of divine

guidance. It is a path we can follow only one step at a time, with patience, hope, and faith. Decisions we make today will influence our future course, our future strengths and abilities.

Spiritual road signs

Thomas Carlyle once remarked, "Know your destiny and follow it." We are here today because we believe that our destiny in life is to gain eternal exaltation. This is the highest goal in life, and it demands all of our strength, devotion, and work. It is impossible to achieve our highest potential destiny without direction and guidance. The Lord gives us spiritual "road signs" which we should follow. Some signposts are:

First, be true. Stand up for the prophets and the scriptures. We want to be able to say, along with Nephi, "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

Second, keep the first of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). Through the choices and temptations of this world, we often lose sight of true values and turn our hearts to wealth, careers, hobbies, persons, honor, pride and, worst of all, to the gratification of our own ego.

Third, distinguish between essence and appearance. God knows our heart, and He cannot be deceived. We might be able to fool the world at times, but we cannot fool God. We will never obtain the joy of loving and trusting relationships with our fellow beings unless these relationships are based on honesty. The Psalmist David says of the Lord:

"O Lord, thou hast . . . known me.

"Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. . . .

"There is not a word in my tongue, but . . . thou knowest it altogether" (Psalm 139:1-2, 4).

Fourth, rise above selfishness. This includes spiritual selfishness, when one looks toward personal edification and strengthening and has no other interest than one's own salvation. To be blessed is not an end in itself; we must be a blessing to others. All people have a talent in one way or another to touch and inspire other people's lives. Let us not only look inward and proudly say, "All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth" (2 Nephi 28:21), but let us be a light unto a chaotic world.

Commit to serve the Lord

Are we able and capable of following such admonitions? How often have we made resolutions which we did not carry out? The only answer to these questions is to commit ourselves to serve the Lord and to meet His challenges. As Moroni wrote, the Lord's grace is sufficient for all who humble themselves before Him. If we humble ourselves and have faith in Him, He will make our weaknesses into our strengths (see Ether 12:27). He will provide His strength to meet our challenges, and many things will take care of themselves. The Spirit of God strengthens us physically, spiritually, and emotionally. It is now up to us to choose the way! Caterina Di Genova, who died in the Middle Ages as a martyr and who inspired future generations, is believed to have said, "Once God possesses the will of a person, God will dwell within this person and will lead him to perfection." To prevail in this world without God is difficult. Through God, however, all things are possible.

Should we expect or ask for a reward for our efforts? The disciples asked Jesus about a reward. Instead of chastising them, He answered, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren,

or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19:29).

What are we contributing?

The ills of today's world and fleeting social peace are the result of past wrongdoings and disregard of godly principles. The spiritual strength of every new generation has its roots in parents' and grandparents' love for God and obedience to the gospel. As individuals and as a church, we must ask ourselves what we are contributing to our fellow beings. When Switzerland was in the process of political consolidation at the beginning of its new federation in 1862, the Swiss poet and novelist Gottfried Keller had questions similar to those of our time.

"Have I and my house lived such that I am in a position to be of benefit to the whole and to contribute to the humble embellishment, not in the eyes of an ignorant world, but in the eyes of the highest judge? Then when we ask ourselves how we fare today as a nation before nations and how we have held in trust the assets which have been given us, in that day we should not present ourselves in vain self-glory before the Lord of all nations, for He sees through all insufficiencies, understands how to distinguish between luck and honest efforts, and between substance and appearance."

Let us search our hearts as we ask the question "What shall we do?" and follow the advice of Joshua: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but

as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Sister Ruth B. Wright, second counselor in the general Primary presidency, and Elder Hans B. Ringger of the Seventy.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker. Before hearing his address, we express appreciation to the Relief Society Choir from the Olympus Utah Region, the Mormon Youth Chorus, the Melchizedek Priesthood Choir from the University Utah Region, and the Tabernacle Choir, and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given the conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on the stand and on Temple Square.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference.

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of the conference in many countries.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Gospel provides precious perspective

During the last days, when "all things shall be in commotion" (D&C 88:91), the restored gospel of Jesus Christ provides so many essential things, including precious perspective of seeing "things as

they really are" (Jacob 4:13).

The eminent historian Will Durant wrote of the human need "to seize the value and perspective of passing things. . . . We want to know that the little things are little, and the big things big, before it is too late; we want to see things now

as they will seem forever—"in the light of eternity."¹

The gospel's illumination provides so much greater perspective for us concerning the role of the family.

Before citing some challenges to family life, consider, first, brothers and sisters, how living without God in the world brings a functional lack of consistent perspective. If there were no eternal truths, to what principles would mortals look for guidance? If not accountable to God, to whom are we ultimately accountable? Furthermore, if nothing is ever really wrong, then no one is ever really responsible. If there are no fixed boundaries, then there cannot be any excesses. Why should we be surprised, then, at so many disturbing outcomes, including the lack of community, when every man does that which is "right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25) and seeks not the righteousness of the Lord but instead follows "in his own way"? (D&C 1:16).

Reflect, for instance, on how inoperative the Ten Commandments are in many lives. Today, *killing*, *stealing*, and bearing *false witness* still carry some social stigma and legal sanction, but sanction is effectively gone regarding sexual immorality, the Sabbath day, honoring fathers and mothers, and the taking of the name of the Lord in vain. Some of this decline represents the bitter harvest of ethical relativism, the philosophy of choice of many, reflecting no fixed, divine truths but merely the mores of the moment. No wonder Ortega y Gasset wisely warned, "If truth does not exist, relativism cannot take itself seriously."²

Terrible trends in society

Note several terrible trends which, *if uncorrected*, will produce an even worse coalition of consequences.

- In ten years, one-half of all children born in America will be illegitimate.³

- More and more children have no functioning fathers. Already 70 percent of our juvenile criminals come from fatherless homes.⁴

- "Less than half of all children born today will live continuously with their own mother and father throughout childhood."⁵

- "One-fourth of all adolescents . . . contract a sexually transmitted disease before they graduate from high school."⁶

- "Fifty-five percent of [American] children under the age of six . . . have both parents or their only parent working in the labor force."⁷

Endangered families

Father Lehi once described himself as a "trembling parent" (2 Nephi 1:14). There are trembling parents and grandparents today! Some of today's families already exist in a worse wilderness than did Father Lehi's. Healthy, traditional families are becoming an endangered species! Perhaps, one day, families may even rank with the threatened spotted owl in effective attention given!

As parenting declines, the need for policing increases. There will always be a shortage of police if there is a shortage of effective parents! Likewise, there will not be enough prisons if there are not enough good homes.

There is, as we all know, much talk about family values, but rhetoric, by itself, cannot bring reform. Nostalgically, many wish for the family life of yesteryear; they regard family decline as regrettable but not reversible. Others, genuinely worried over the spilling social consequences, are busy placing sandbags downstream, even when the frenzied use of sandbags often destroys what little is left of family gardens. A few regard the family as an institution to be drastically redefined or even to be rid of.

There are no perfect families, either in the world or in the Church, but there are many good families. My spiritual

applause also goes to those heroic parents—left alone by death or divorce—who are righteously and “anxiously engaged” in nurturing and providing for their families, often against such heavy odds.

Alas, in some families things do go wretchedly wrong, but these gross failures are no reason to denigrate further the institution of the family. We should make course corrections and fix the leaks, not abandon ship!

Unhealthy attitudes toward families

Much modern despair and violence grow out of unhealthy attitudes towards any authority, including that in families. Thirty-five years ago, a BBC commentator insightfully worried “that we are turning out adults who have an even less clear and consistent attitude towards authority than we have ourselves, and who will be even less capable than their parents in raising children with a sane attitude towards authority, and so an insidious avalanche may be developing, gathering a ghastly momentum from generation to generation.”⁸

The “ghastly momentum” increases as profound social changes now occur in “only a few years” (Moroni 9:12).

Creating successful families

Unfortunately it is easier to praise the family than to create a successful family. It is easier to talk, as I am doing, of family values than to implement those values. It is easier to rejoice over our rich memories of a good family than to provide the rising generation with its own rich memories.

The hard doctrines, however, insist that we ask some hard questions. How can a nation nurture family values without consistently valuing and protecting the family in its public policies? How can we value the family without valuing parenting? And how can we value par-

enting if we do not value marriage? How can there be “love at home” without love in a marriage? So many selfish tugs draw fathers and mothers away from each other and away from their children.

In contrast, so much of the Restoration focuses on fundamental principles pertaining to the family, including sealings of eternal families. Latter-day Saints therefore have no choice but to stand up and to speak up whenever the institution of the family is concerned, even if we are misunderstood, resented, or brushed aside.

After all, mortal families predate the founding of nations, and families will exist after the Almighty “hath made a full end of all nations” (D&C 87:6). For Latter-day Saints, though it is to be done in the Lord’s own way, every year should be the Year of the Family. However, as Latter-day Saints we need to do better in our families—much better! There should be less wringing of hands and more loving arms around our families.

Of all the work of “perfecting the Saints,” none compares to that done in healthy families. President David O. McKay taught, “The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place nor fulfill its essential functions.”⁹ Sometimes, unintentionally, even certain extracurricular Church activities, insensitively administered, can hamper family life.

Instructively, after the resurrected Jesus taught the Nephites, He said, “Go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said,” and pray and prepare “for the morrow” (3 Nephi 17:3). Jesus did not say go to your civic clubs, town meetings, or even stake centers!

Tend to the family garden

Attending to all family duties includes really teaching our children “to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God”

(D&C 68:25). What a different view of parenting from that of the world. Marie Winn lamented in *Children without Childhood* how there is an emerging but unjustified tendency to treat children as if they have the capacity for unrestricted adult experience.¹⁰

Brothers and sisters, we may not be able to change such trends, but we can refuse to be a part of them.

When parents fail to transmit testimony and theology along with decency, those families are only one generation from serious spiritual decline, having lost their savor. The law of the harvest is nowhere more in evidence and nowhere more relentless than in family gardens!

In addition to our having loving family "sociality," which, one day, will be "coupled with eternal glory," we stress again and again the available remedies of family prayers, family home evenings, and family scripture study (D&C 130:2). Moreover, personal revelation regarding parenting can provide customized guidance and reassurance!

Basic remedies to family problems

Applying basic remedies will take some time and will not fix everything immediately. What could be more basic, however, than "love at home," when annually in America there are four million reports of domestic violence, rivaling the number of births in America!¹¹ Violence in America now kills "the equivalent of a classroomful" of children "every two days."¹²

In the face of such challenges, we need more mothers who know the truth, whose children do not doubt their mothers know it (see Alma 56:48). My children and grandchildren are blessed with such a mother and grandmother. We need more kind and thoughtful fathers who also carry the authority of example. More parents should be remembered as a prophet's daughter, Helen Lee Goates, remembers hers: "A father who

was gentle beneath his firmness, and a mother who was firm beneath her gentleness."¹³

In the healthy family, first and best, we can learn to listen, forgive, praise, and to rejoice in the achievements of others. There also we can learn to tame our egos, work, repent, and love. In families with spiritual perspective, yesterday need not hold tomorrow hostage. If we sometimes act the fool, loving families know this is not our last act; the curtain is not rung down.

To some, these remedies, and things like them, may seem too simple to heal a society stung by so many afflictions. In afflicted ancient Israel, some also disdained the simple, divinely provided remedies, and they perished (see 1 Nephi 17:41).

Focus anew on the family

Obviously, family values mirror our personal priorities. Given the gravity of current conditions, would parents be willing to give up just one outside thing, giving that time and talent instead to the family? Parents and grandparents, please scrutinize your schedules and priorities in order to ensure that life's prime relationships get more prime time! Even consecrated and devoted Brigham Young was once told by the Lord, "Take especial care of your family" (D&C 126:3). Sometimes it is the most conscientious who need this message the most!

Society should focus anew on the headwaters—the family—where values can be taught, lived, experienced, and perpetuated. Otherwise, brothers and sisters, we will witness even more widespread flooding downstream, featuring even more corruption and violence (see Genesis 6:11–12; Matthew 24:37).

If the combination of rainmakers prevails, however, the rains will continue to descend, and the floods will continue to come. Dikes and sandbags downstream will be no match for the coming

crests. More and more families, even nations, if built upon secular sand instead of gospel granite, will suffer.

As the number of dysfunctional families increases, their failures will spill into already burdened schools and streets. It is not a pretty scene even now.

Nations in which traditional idealism gives way to modern cynicism will forfeit the blessings of heaven, which they so urgently need, and such nations will also lose legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens.

Praise be to Jesus

Amid the Babel of prescriptions from "so many kinds of voices in the world," rescuing and redeeming perspective requires our coming to know who Jesus Christ is, how He lived, and what He died for (1 Corinthians 14:10; see also John 10:27). After all, it is Jesus who has given us commanding perspective concerning families.

Therefore, as this Easter day draws to a close, how fitting that we contemplate atoning Jesus—bending and curved in Gethsemane. His bleeding curvature transformed the grammar of death. Until Gethsemane and Calvary, death was a punctuating, rigid exclamation point! Then death, too, curved—into a mere comma!

Praise be to Jesus for bearing the sins and pains of all "the family of Adam" back then (2 Nephi 9:21; 2:20). Let us strive here and now to take especial care of our families as Jesus did of His, "even the family of all the earth" (2 Nephi 2:20). I so pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *The Story of Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1927), p. 1.
2. José Ortega y Gasset, *The Modern Theme*, trans. James Cleugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 29.
3. See President Clinton, "State of the Union Address," CNN Specials, 25 Jan. 1994, p. 3.
4. See "The Basics Debate," *Wall Street Journal*, 18 Nov. 1993, sec. A, p. 18.
5. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle Was Right," *Atlantic Monthly*, Apr. 1993, p. 47.
6. *Research Briefs from Utah Foundation*, 16 July 1993, p. 1.
7. *Research Briefs*, p. 1.
8. Quoted in *The Listener*, 12 Feb. 1959.
9. *Family Home Evening Manual* (1965), p. iii.
10. See *Children without Childhood* (New York: Penguin, 1983), p. 5.
11. See "Callers Weigh in on Domestic Abuse," CNN, 6 Nov. 1993; *The World Almanac* (Mahwah, N.J.: Funk and Wagnall's, 1993), p. 954.
12. Jennifer Dixon, "A Youth Dies by Gunfire Every Two Hours," *Deseret News*, 20 Jan. 1994, sec. A, p. 1.
13. In Neal A. Maxwell, *That My Family Should Partake* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974), p. 56.

President Monson

He to whom we have listened is Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. And with his remarks and the hymn and the prayer to follow, another great conference comes to a close.

We have missed Elder Marvin J. Ashton and another familiar soul at our conferences, D. Arthur Haycock, each of whom has passed away since our last conference. Our hearts and our prayers go out to Sister Ashton, Sister Haycock, and all who have loved and lost someone during this period.

President Benson's chair, situated between President Hinckley and me, has been unoccupied at this conference, although he has viewed the conference proceedings at his apartment by television. Our hearts are full of love for

the prophet of God, and his teachings ring in our ears. If he were standing before us at this moment at the conclusion of the conference, I believe he would say, "Lord, it has been good for us to be here."

We have sustained with our uplifted hands and also with our hearts those called to new positions of responsibility.

As we leave for our homes, may we travel in peace and safety. May we be obedient to the commandments of God. As we reflect upon the messages of conference, we see woven like a beautiful golden thread in a fine tapestry the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sanctity of the home, and the importance of obedience to divine teachings.

I like the thought, "Before Easter, there must be a cross." And many have heavy crosses to bear. With the birth of the Babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment—a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. He may come to us as one unknown, without a name, as by the lakeside He came to those men

who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same words, "Follow thou me," and sets us to the task which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands, and to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings that they shall pass through in His fellowship; and they shall learn in their own experience who He is.

May we praise His name, follow His example, and incorporate His truths into our lives, and then this conference will have been successful. That such may be our experience, I pray in His worthy name—even Jesus Christ—amen.

The choir will now sing "More Holiness Give Me," and the benediction will be offered by Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Seventy.

The choir sang "More Holiness Give Me."

Elder Jay E. Jensen offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

Music for the Saturday morning session of the conference was provided by a Relief Society choir from the Olympus Utah Region. Bonnie Winterton conducted the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided the music for the Saturday afternoon session. Linda Margetts was the organist.

At the general priesthood session, a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from the University Utah Region provided the music. Edgar J. Thompson conducted the choir, and Richard L. Elliott was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Clay Christiansen and John Longhurst were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard L. Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the Conference

A

Asay, Elder Carlos E.	10
“Can I die?” The real issue: “Shall I live again?” Two classes of evidence; New Testament witnesses; Book of Mormon witnesses; Personal testimonies; “Walk with me”; We shall live again!	
Authorities and Officers, The Sustaining of Church	28
Authorities Present, General	1
Authorities Present, Other	2

B

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Stretching the cords of the tent; Tribute to wife; A young Japanese man gains a testimony	
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C

Choules, Elder Albert, Jr.	14
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Didier, Elder Charles	57
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F

- Faust, Elder James E.** 3
 Five loaves and two fishes; We have forgotten the miracle; God has fed us in our time; Service of members with few talents; Ego and pride prevent service; Humble members strengthen the Church; Effects of Jeralee Underwood's life

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